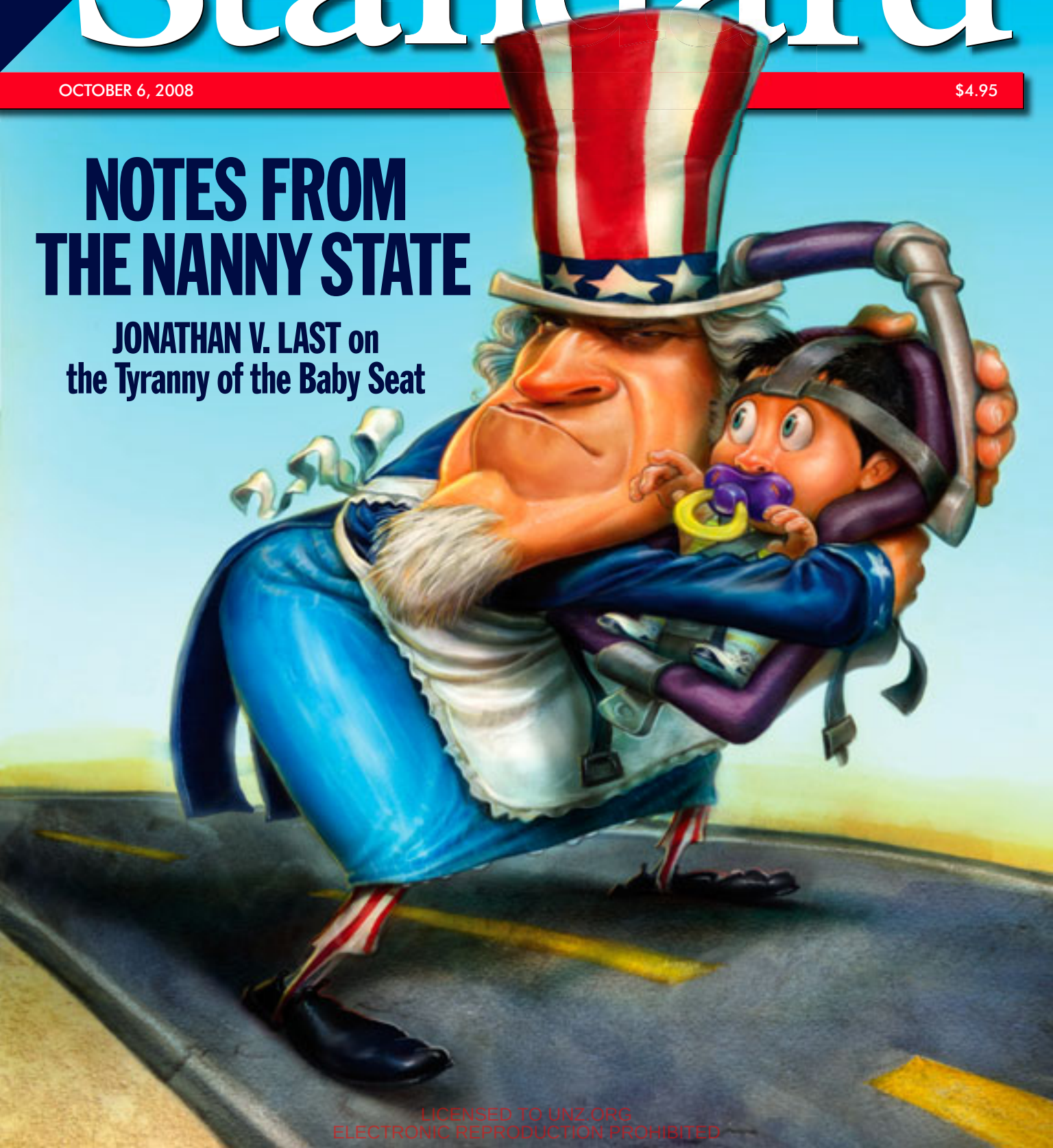
the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 6, 2008 $4.95

WHERE WERE YOU THE DAY LEHMAN BROS. DIED?
PHILIP TERZIAN

NOTES FROM THE NANNY STATE

JONATHAN V. LAST on the Tyranny of the Baby Seat



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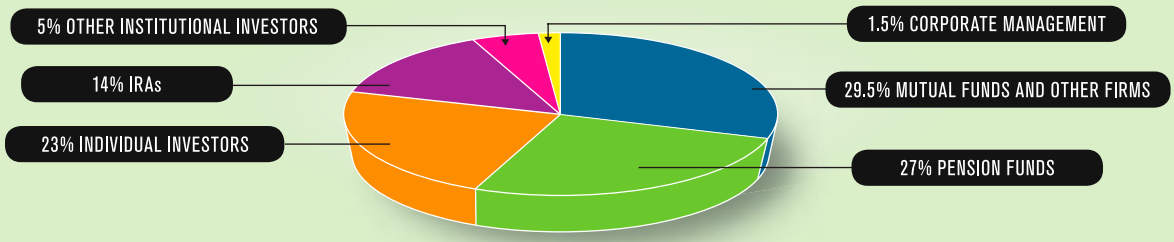

U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Company Ownership, 2007

Do you own an oil company?

If you've ever wondered who owns America's oil and natural gas companies, chances are the answer is, "you do."

Surprised?

The fact is that if you have a mutual fund account – and 55 million American households, with a median income of under $70,000, do – there's a good chance it invests in oil and natural gas company stocks. If you have an IRA or personal retirement account – and 45 million U.S. households do – there is a good chance it invests in energy stocks.

Tens of millions of Americans own a piece of the U.S. oil and natural gas industry

All this comes from a recent study* of U.S. oil and natural gas company ownership headed by Robert J. Shapiro, undersecretary of commerce for economic affairs under President Bill Clinton.

According to the study, the majority of the industry's shareholders are "middle-class U.S. households with mutual fund investments, pension accounts, other personal retirement accounts, and small personal portfolios."

What many may find particularly surprising is that our industry's corporate management owns only a tiny fraction of company shares.

Specifically, here is what the study found:

- 29.5 percent of U.S. oil and natural gas company shares are owned by mutual funds and other firms
- 27 percent are owned by pension funds
- Individual investors own 23 percent
- 14 percent are held in IRA accounts
- 5 percent are owned by other institutional investors
- 1.5 percent are held by corporate management (significantly less in the largest companies)

These findings tell us something very important: tens of millions of Americans have a stake in the U.S. oil and natural gas industry. When the industry's earnings are strong, the real winners are middle-class Americans, people investing in their retirement security or saving for their children's college education.

So when the political rhetoric gets hot about increasing energy taxes or taking "excess profits" from U.S. oil companies, it is important to step back, look at the facts, and ask yourself, "who does that really hurt?"

To read the full study, visit EnergyTomorrow.org.

THE *people* OF AMERICA'S OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

*SONECON: *The Distribution of Ownership of U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Companies*, September 2007

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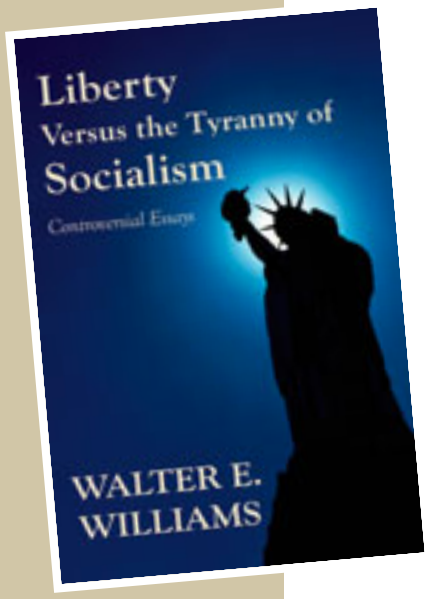

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Walter E. Williams

Liberty Versus the Tyranny of Socialism
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BY WALTER E. WILLIAMS

In this selected collection of his syndicated newspaper columns, Walter E. Williams once again takes on the left wing's most sacred cows with provocative insights and brutal honesty. He offers his sometimes controversial views on education, health, the environment, government, law and society, race, and a range of other topics, always with an uncompromising reverence for personal liberty and the principles laid out in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Do we want socialized medicine? Do peace treaties produce peace? What's wrong with education? What's discrimination? Do we really care about children? Is this the America we want? Williams answers these and other provocative questions with his usual unflinching candor. Although many of these thoughtful, hard-hitting essays focus on the growth of government and our loss of liberty, many others demonstrate how the tools of free market economics can be used to improve our lives in ways ordinary people can understand—not just in the realm of trade and the cost of goods and services but in such diverse areas as racial discrimination, national defense, and even marriage.

Walter E. Williams is the John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University and a nationally syndicated columnist.

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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It's All Our Fault

Thank goodness for Karen DeYoung. The Scrapbook, it seems, has badly misunderstood U.S.-North Korean nuclear diplomacy. We had been under the impression that North Korea became a nuclear power largely because of the obsessive desires of its erratic dictator, Kim Jong Il, that he had been willing to starve his population in order to make himself the head of a nuclear state and shake down the civilized world for enough money and aid to keep the Hermit Kingdom afloat.

But DeYoung, senior diplomatic correspondent and associate editor of the *Washington Post*, helpfully corrected our misimpressions in an article last week on North Korea's decision, once again, to restart its nuclear program.

> North Korea's program, frozen under a 1994 agreement with the Clinton administration, was restarted in 2002 after the Bush administration accused Pyongyang of violating the terms of the accord. Pyongyang then reactivated the Yongbyon reactor and produced enough plutonium for a half-dozen weapons. In 2006, it exploded a small nuclear device.
>
> Last year, a deal was struck between North Korea and the five partners [China, South Korea, Japan, Russia, and the United States] in which Pyongyang agreed to dismantle its weapons program in exchange for diplomatic concessions and energy assistance. In June, North Korea turned over a 60-page declaration that included details of its plutonium production and blew up the cooling tower at the shuttered Yongbyon facility.
>
> The Bush administration, whose senior ranks have long been divided over how tough to be on North Korea, said it needed to verify the assertions in the declaration. When it let slide the August date for removing Pyongyang from a terrorist list—which bans defense sales and restricts trade, foreign aid and financial transactions—the North Koreans announced they were suspending the dismantlement of the reactor and said last week that they were preparing to restart it.

Ah, much clearer now. We didn't realize the Bush administration "accused" the North Koreans of violating the 1994 Agreed Framework; it had been our impression that North Korean first vice foreign minister Kang Suk Ju *admitted* his government was operating a secret uranium enrichment program—a blatant violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework, and proof that the Norks' program hadn't really been "frozen."

And we believed that the 60-page "declaration" in June was in fact incomplete and answered very few of the questions the United States and its partners had posed in negotiating the 2007 deal. Hence, the diplomatic concessions and energy assistance were awaiting the submission by North Korea of a nuclear declaration that would not elicit howls of laughter even from those at the State Department who are eager for a deal—any deal—with North Korea.

Thus we understood that when the Bush administration "said it needed to verify the assertions in the declaration," it was merely following up on the only real condition of the deal, and that when it "let slide" the diplomatic concessions requested by North Korea it did so because the North Korean declaration was so inadequate that it failed even to please the pro-Nork diplomats at the State Department.

Finally, we had assumed that an important moment in the history of U.S.-North Korea nuclear dealings was the discovery last year that North Korea had provided nuclear technology to Syria, the world's second-leading state sponsor of terror. DeYoung didn't include that in her account, but given what we've learned from her piece, we assume that this, too, was somehow the fault of the Bush administration. ♦

Gone Today, Hair Tomorrow

The Scrapbook, ever mindful of our nation's past, hastens to point out that this election is historic for reasons having nothing to do with John McCain's age, or Barack Obama's race, or Sarah Palin's sex.

If the Democratic ticket should prevail in November, the United States will boast its first vice president—just a heartbeat away from the Oval Office, as they say—who has benefited from what Sy Sperling of the Hair Club for Men calls a "high-tech hair system." Which is to say, Joe Biden underwent a hair transplant in the 1980s.

Now, we concede, Biden was not the first senator to disguise his shining pate with strategically implanted follicle plugs—that was William Proxmire of Wisconsin in the 1970s—nor is this a practice confined to Democrats. The late Strom Thurmond's legendary virility was, no doubt, enhanced by his own high-tech hair system.

But no senator with a wig (the late William Roth of Delaware) or flamboyant combover (Carl Levin of Michigan) or dye job (the two Californians, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein) has ever come so tantalizingly close to national office as Joe Biden this year.

Our colleague, Literary Editor Philip Terzian, takes it from here: "Late one evening, two decades ago, I was on the Metroliner sleeper from Washington to Providence, and decided to head toward the club car for some sustenance. Moving slowly down

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of July 26, 2004)

the gangway, I suddenly realized that, dozing comfortably in his aisle seat to my right, was Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, on his famous nightly commuting run to Wilmington.

"Having once stood behind Strom Thurmond on an escalator, which afforded me a bird's-eye view of his orange-tinted transplants, I recognized that this was a rare opportunity. And so, pretending to adjust my shoelaces, and rearrange some errant luggage, I lingered in the aisle long enough to get a good scientific glimpse—mere inches away—of Biden's ersatz locks.

"Like all transplant jobs, it featured a rigid, straight hairline across the forehead which, of course, is never found in nature. And in those days, at least, Senator Biden was prone to augment his high-tech system with some color approximately the shade of brown shoe polish.

"Yet I was impressed by the fact that the carpet—unlike, say, Thurmond's—didn't cover every square inch of the landscape, allowing Biden to comb over a strategic bald patch on the top of his head.

"Now that he is running for vice president, and seems to have put the shoe polish away, Biden's hair system—except for that artificially straight forelock—looks almost, but not quite, persuasive."

Which leads The Scrapbook to conclude, as always, that politics is a strange business. We have now lived long enough to be informed that Senator Biden—goofy, gaffe-prone, ever-grinning, yackety Joe Biden—lends "gravitas" to a national ticket, and that the days of distinguished bald national candidates—think Dwight D. Eisenhower vs. Adlai Stevenson—are gone, probably forever. ♦

Borat Goes to Russia

Important news from the science section of the English-language edition of *Pravda*, September 25, 2008: "Sunbathing topless not recommended for fatty and not pretty women." Among other reasons cited in the unbylined article, "mammalogists strongly disapprove topless beach leisure. . . . In addition to medical nuances, sunbathing topless also involves an element of flirting, psychologists say. Many women like it when men stare at them." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'The Bush administration has been singularly lacking in a sense of the earth, in a feeling of planetariness. It has taught American nationalism a terrible . . ." (Leon Wieseltier, *New Republic*, October 8) ♦

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Casual

My Century

One hundred of anything can technically be called a century, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, but when I heard that a one-day, hundred-mile trip on a bicycle was called a century, I took it to mean *a really long time*. Instead I should have been thinking, a *really long distance*.

My wife and I were planning a two-week vacation at Deep Creek Lake, in western Maryland. I had only one week of vacation, so I would be joining Cynthia and the kids for the second week of the stay. The question of how I would get there arose. Cynthia and the kids were taking the family car.

Not a problem, I explained, earnest as a Boy Scout about to earn a merit badge: The towpath for the C & O Canal, a well-known bike path, courses out that way along the Potomac. Its terminus lies a short car-ride from the lake. I bicycle to work every day, and here was a nice opportunity to try something longer, 184 miles long to be exact.

The trip would take me three days, I told Cynthia, about 60 miles a day. But with three kids to supervise, she was going to be waiting eagerly for my arrival. The trip would take two days, she told me.

I had a little choice in how to break up the journey. Given the location of hotels along the path I could do the shorter leg, of 80 or so miles, on Day One or Day Two. But as a website for the towpath explained, "Either way, you are looking at doing a *century* during one of the days." Ah yes, I thought, there's that word again. I decided to knock off the hundred miles on Day One.

The night before I left, I realized the backup tubes I had bought were the wrong size, so in the morning before leaving I went to the bike store. This put me on the path at 11 A.M., while I had planned to leave around 8. Still, it felt great taking off. The path turned to mud at several points in the first 30 miles, causing my thin hybrid tires to slip around, but my odometer showed that I was making good time on the dry stretches in between. After a quick lunch of ice cream and chips around Mile 33, I hopped back on the bike with great energy.

Bicycling magazine publishes a guide to preparing to ride a century. It's called *100 Days to 100 Miles*. The book has charts for tracking your weight and how much you're sleeping, suggestions for incremental goals, and answers to important questions like, How much should I eat while riding? Too bad I read the book weeks later.

Aside from a couple of brief trips on the towpath to test-ride its pebbly surface, I had done little preparation. Whatever, I'd thought, I'm one of those people who learn by doing. Which is how I learned about what bicyclists call "the wall" or "a bonk."

After letting out a manly roar as I passed the Mile 50 marker, I started thinking about when to stop for food. Waiting for the bike shop to open in the morning, I'd had a scone. Then around 1 P.M., that ice cream bar and chips. Also, I'd eaten some plums. Too bad, I remember thinking, they don't sell plums on a shoulder strap so you could wear them like a bandoleer.

Then, BAM!—no more silly thoughts. My balance was being thrown off by the enormous weight of my head, and my chest felt as if someone who doesn't bike very often were sitting on it. My lungs wheezed as I found myself checking and rechecking the odometer, watching not miles, but tenths and even hundredths of miles tick slowly by.

HAL MAYFORTH

At Mile 53, I stumbled into a diner called Mommer's, where I hugged the counter and would have cried had I the energy. Ninety minutes, four pancakes, two eggs, four pieces of toast, several pieces of bacon, two plates of French fries, four glasses of water, three Cokes, and one cup of coffee later, I was back on my bike and riding at a good clip.

At what I thought was the end of Day One, I rolled into the parking lot of the Red Roof Inn in Williamsport, Maryland, and looked down at my odometer. It had the gall to say I had traveled a mere 97 miles. So I did what anyone else would've done. I turned my bike around and continued pedaling for another three miles.

David Skinner

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Leaders Without Followers

Just over a week ago the collapse in credit markets forced the secretary of the Treasury to assemble a bipartisan group from both houses of Congress to sell a record-setting government-bailout plan of the financial industry. Trouble was no such plan existed at the time of the meeting. He set off a mad scramble to come up with the barest outlines of a plan on Saturday followed by two Democratic outlines, one for the House and one for the Senate, on Sunday.

By Monday the 22nd, it was obvious to markets and most other observers that, when it came to the plans, there was not a lot of "there" there. Unintended consequences multiplied. So, when Henry Paulson and Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke began their gauntlet of testimonies on Tuesday, the mood was intensely skeptical, even bordering on hostile. Equity markets crashed. Credit markets seized up again on Wednesday, even though stocks stabilized.

By Thursday stocks had rallied on expectations that Congress would pass a bill by the end of the weekend. Democrats announced they had an agreement amongst themselves, but their rank and file were decidedly not on board. Nonetheless, the president arranged a seal-the-deal ceremony for Thursday afternoon at the White House with the congressional leadership and both McCain and Obama present. It was to be followed by a photo opportunity with the current president and the two men who might succeed him collectively blessing a bailout package.

It was not to be.

Senator Richard Shelby, deeply suspicious of the Paulson plan, left the meeting early and declared there was no deal. Obama headed for the Mayflower Hotel to hold his own press conference. The Democratic leadership focused on mocking McCain, blaming him for the failure, a narrative that the media parroted, ignoring the fact that if what the Democrats claimed was true, they had the votes to pass the law.

Still, as of this writing on Friday night, a bill was almost certain to get passed. The Democratic congressional leadership and the White House have had a "Continuing Resolution" strategy in their back pocket all along. The plan was to roll goodies for the auto industry and other special interests, a "safety net" package, and the latest version of the Paulson plan in with authority for the government to spend money after midnight on Tuesday. The alternative would be a government shut down.

Thus stands the state of governance of the greatest economic power in the history of the world. And on this basis politicians claim that what is needed is more regulation by government.

The central problem of the deal was that it takes a commanding heights approach. The key beneficiaries are to be the very largest New York-based financial institutions and a few billionaires like Warren Buffett and Bill Gross. Buffet even said as much. He plunked down a cool $5 billion to buy preferred stock yielding 10 percent in Paulson's old firm, Goldman Sachs, saying he was confident that Congress would pass the Paulson bailout bill.

The plan had a commanding heights problem in the Congress as well. The Democratic leadership, including committee chairmen Barney Frank, Chris Dodd, and Chuck Schumer, were enthusiastic. But it was hard to find an ordinary member who exuded confidence. The presi-

The central problem of the deal was that it takes a commanding heights approach. The key beneficiaries are to be the very largest New York-based financial institutions and a few billionaires like Warren Buffett and Bill Gross. The plan had a commanding heights problem in the Congress as well. The Democratic leadership, including committee chairmen Barney Frank, Chris Dodd, and Chuck Schumer, were enthusiastic. The ordinary members weren't.

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THOMAS FLUHARTY

dent gave a prime-time speech to push the bill on Wednesday night. It was a good performance, but on Thursday morning it wasn't any easier to find Republican congressmen who supported the plan.

But the greatest commanding heights problem was that the plan had virtually no public support. Congressmen reported record-breaking email and phone calls from constituents, running as much as 300 to 1 against. The public saw it as a bailout of Wall Street. What had not been explained was how bailing out Wall Street would also help them. There is a good case that could be made on that score, but it hasn't been.

Ultimately the bill will be a missed opportunity. No one with experience in these matters believes the Treasury purchase plan is workable. It will take weeks, maybe months, to set up—not something that makes sense when the country is allegedly teetering on a precipice. The plan, moreover, should have been accompanied with measures that would stabilize the banking sector and prevent any possiblity of a bank run. On Thursday night the FDIC did a forced sale of Washington Mutual to J.P. Morgan just to avoid the potential disaster of the bank runs that would follow if uninsured depositors were not protected. Eighteen billion had left WaMu in the days leading up to the purchase. On Friday a similar run began on Wachovia. In this environment, not removing the deposit insurance cap could be a recipe for disaster, more than undoing any possible benefits from the legislation.

When the people atop the commanding heights of the economy think that they know best, and their followers' concerns are ignored, problems inevitably follow. We can only hope that America will be spared relearning this lesson of history, too painfully, this time around.

—Lawrence B. Lindsey, for the Editors

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The Warrior and the Priest

The revealing campaign styles of John McCain and Barack Obama. BY FRED BARNES

John McCain, restless and emotional, couldn't resist the temptation to join the battle to rescue our financial markets and save the economy. It was the biggest and most important fight around, bigger and more important than his campaign scrap with Barack Obama. Being engaged in the action—in the arena—is where McCain always wants to be. So he cast his presidential campaign aside, temporarily, and headed back to Washington. The campaign could wait. It might even benefit.

GARY LOCKE

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Obama, placid and professorial, had a different reaction to the fight over the bailout. Even before McCain's maneuver he'd rejected the idea of putting his campaign on hold and joining the legislative battle. He'd be available if needed. An abrupt change in plans, a sudden shift, is not his style. His campaign would go on. He returned to Washington reluctantly. If he hadn't, his campaign might have suffered.

The contrast here is not only dramatic. It's unusually revealing about the two candidates and how they might act as president. There's an analogy that captures the difference: the warrior and the priest. McCain the warrior, Obama the priest. (If "priest" seems confusing, substitute "professor.")

McCain has been a player in every major fight, in war and in Washington, for more than four decades. As far back as 1962, he waited in Florida as a Navy pilot for the order to attack during the Cuban missile crisis. (The order never came.) As a senator, he's never stayed on the sidelines. As a candidate, he likes the rough-and-tumble and unpredictable turns of town hall meetings.

Obama prefers set speeches delivered with the aid of a teleprompter, a reflection of his more aloof and less engaged approach to politics and policy. In Democratic primary debates, he tended to be passive. Where McCain is an activist, Obama is more a visionary. As a senator, he's involved himself only on the fringes of big issues.

Long before the McCain-Obama race, the warrior and the priest comparison was applied to Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson in a book by John Milton Cooper Jr., a history professor at the University of Wisconsin. *The Warrior and the Priest* was published in 1983 and was not widely acclaimed, but it's become a cult classic.

Cooper described Roosevelt, the warrior, as "exuberant and expansive," a man who "epitomized the enjoyment of power." He gained fame "through well-cultivated press coverage of his exploits as a reformer, rancher, hunter, police commissioner, war hero, and engaging personality." And TR was "associated conspicuously and consistently with one issue above all others—war." Sounds like McCain.

Wilson, the priest, was "disciplined and controlled," Cooper wrote. "He seemingly embodied a less joyful exercise of power." Until he ran for office, Wilson was "a spectator and a bystander." Roosevelt was a "tireless evangelist for international activism,"

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but Wilson had "a more pacific vision." His entry into politics at the highest level was created by his reputation as "a widely regarded public speaker." Obama isn't Wilson personified, but he comes close.

The contrast in style between McCain and Obama is a significant dividing line in the campaign—and not just in last week's bailout battle. In electing a president, Americans choose a person, not a party leader. Personal traits—character, likeability, temperament, public style—matter.

Since Obama captured the Democratic nomination last June, he and McCain have taken strikingly different approaches as candidates. McCain challenged Obama to ten town hall debates over the summer. Obama declined, recognizing these unscripted events favored McCain's mercurial style of campaigning.

Then McCain, like a general changing his tactics on the fly, picked Alaska governor Sarah Palin as his running mate. This surprise move unnerved Obama and his campaign staff, and they spent several unproductive weeks taking potshots at Palin.

McCain likes surprises and gambles. When his campaign was at its low point in 2007, he rebuffed the advice of his senior advisers and went on what he called a "no surrender tour," defending the unpopular war in Iraq. His gamble paid off when the surge reduced violence and brought the war to the verge of victory today.

Obama, on the other hand, doesn't like quick changes or taking risks. His campaign, like the man himself, has been a picture of steadiness and careful planning. He played it safe by picking Joe Biden as his running mate. He took a chance—a small one—when he flatly rejected McCain's call to postpone their scheduled debate last week. He prevailed.

McCain's skill at changing direction has spurred him to seize Democratic themes as his own. He portrays himself as the real candidate for change in the election. On the bailout, the traditional Democratic position would be to rail against the excesses and corruption of Wall Street. But the ever-cautious Obama hasn't lambasted Wall Street. McCain has.

In his acceptance speech at the Republican convention in August, McCain stressed that he's a fighter. "I don't mind a good fight," he said. "I fight for Americans. I fight for you." This amounted once again to the theft of a reliable Democratic trope.

But McCain has voiced the "fighting for you" refrain only intermittently since the convention. This is a mistake. He doesn't have to worry about Obama, who is too finicky to exploit the theme relentlessly. But "fighting for you" fits perfectly with McCain's pugnacious persona. It's a warrior's message.

In 1912, Roosevelt and Wilson met in the presidential race. The priest won the election. But there was a complication that hampered TR. There was another candidate, Republican president William Howard Taft, who finished third. Absent Taft's presence, the warrior would have won. McCain ought to keep this in mind. ♦

A Kinder, Gentler Mrs. Obama

She's more 'Oprah' than 'The View.'

BY CHARLOTTE HAYS

Richmond

'So here we are—on *The View*. You guys don't be nervous. Just ignore the cameras," says Michelle Obama, wife of the Democratic nominee for president. She is almost breathtaking in a pale blue twin set (the height of staid taste, but luminously set off with a large pin that sparkles even unto the press section), gray slacks, and beige flats, that universal gesture of the tall woman to lesser mortals. She is prettier in person, with a coltish way of moving, and a smile as bright as the pin.

We are at an "economic roundtable for Virginia working women," moderated by Obama, in a smallish ballroom at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Obama is seated around a coffee table with Lilly Ledbetter, the "Alabama grandmother" who unsuccessfully sued Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company for wage discrimination; Anne Holton, Virginia's first lady, a lawyer and advocate for children and families; and three women, who'll "share" their stories. The scene is, indeed, reminiscent of *The View*, site of triumphant appearances by both Obamas. As the discussion develops, however, it becomes clear this is more *The Oprah Winfrey Show* than *The View*. About 200 invited guests, mostly women but including Richmond mayor Douglas Wilder, sporting a new goatee, are in the audience. The racial mix is about 40-60, with slightly more African-American women.

Obama has been doing these economic roundtables all over the country in an effort to reach women whose votes will be crucial in November. The format is simple: A few speakers churn up the assembled, calling on them to work for the Democratic ticket at the grassroots level, and then Obama makes a few remarks and listens to the panelists.

At one such event, in February, Obama famously complained to women in an economically hard-hit hamlet in Ohio of the back-breaking costs of dance, piano, and sports lessons for the Obama girls, a faux pas recorded for posterity by *National Review*'s Byron York. But the women loved her any-

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way, York noted. Today in Richmond Obama limits her catalogue of woes primarily to those oft-mentioned college loans the Obamas had to repay, admitting that "Barack and I had world-class educations" and that "otherwise we wouldn't be here." I wonder: Could the fragile Obama promise not have survived, say, a large state university?

Speaking in a staccato style that contrasts with Michelle's tentative "ums"—no doubt born of the fallout from former forays into spontaneity—Anne Holton, wisely, says her life is pretty good but that other women are suffering. And then Obama gives the mike to Mary Henley, a 78-year-old widow.

"Mary, you think you are ready to get us going? So, Mary, just take your time and tell your story," Obama says. Henley reports that her husband died suddenly, while the couple were in their car, and now Henley, who still works part time, lives on a reduced income and has "a lot of debts."

"Well, again, unfortunately, there are thousands of senior citizens like Mary, people who have worked hard, not sitting in an office, but worked, worked until the bitter end. This is the fate of many seniors," Obama says. If you have any doubt that there are Oprah elements in today's program, Michelle reaches over and hands Henley a Kleenex.

Mrs. Henley's story is sad and disturbing. I almost want a Kleenex because it is not only touching but the sort of story that inspires a shudder in the hearts of all of us who have ever had retiree bag lady fears. Even for one well-disposed towards widows and orphans, however, there is some missing information. How were the Henleys' debts incurred? It may be that they were unavoidable, but we don't know, and adding to the mystery, Henley vaguely notes, "I made some mistakes" in handling her money. Most of us have, but the question is whether Mrs. Henley's plight stems from her mistakes or factors in the economy that require government intervention. Throughout the two-hour roundtable, the same question might be asked of each participant—but isn't.

The next panelist, Leigh Hite, a "full-time college student," who is also a "full-time" mother, who works "full-time"—whew—has been in the same job for 19 years and now wants to make a change. College tuition is eating her family alive, and they can no longer live "paycheck to paycheck" as they did before the Bush administration came to office.

Instead of raising the question as to why college costs astronomically more than it once did (some have suggested government aid might, ironically, be a root cause), Obama invokes the specter of former senator and McCain adviser Phil Gramm, without quite naming him. She says some people believe that the "challenges people face are not real" and "then we start to blame ourselves." The Obama campaign doesn't want you to ever blame yourself.

Michelle Obama, swapping sob stories in Richmond

ASSOCIATED PRESS / STEVE HELBER

"It's important for people to know this isn't in your head—it's real," Obama says, before asking Rosaline Perry, the final speaker, who has education loans from her son and a mother with Alzheimer's, to "take it away, Roz." Like the other panelists, Perry has had a tough time. But how is Barack Obama going to make "all these aides and nurses just walking around" her mother's nursing home more attentive to Roz Perry's mother?

We are definitely in the realm of Michelle-as-Oprah. It is a kinder, gentler version of the Michelle who was once known for conducting an entirely different kind of workshop—tough "diversity training" sessions in Chicago back in the early 1990s. *Washington Post* reporter Liza Mundy describes these sessions in her new book, *Michelle: A Biography* (Simon & Schuster)—an enormously valuable source for the context of Michelle's life. "Michelle was tough, tough in a good sense," Julian Posada, her deputy when she was director of Public Allies, a nonprofit that trained young people to work with other nonprofits, is quoted as saying. "She was very good about being meticulous about the details: Are you on message? Are we meeting people's expectations?"

On most days, allies were put in unlikely groupings and sent on scavenger hunts, according to Mundy. Diversity training was on Fridays, when everybody came into the office to participate. "You'd take people through, what are your biases, people would learn how other people were feeling about stuff," said Posada. There was "lots of squishy stuff" (Oprah foreshadowed?), but there were also "incredibly powerful growth opportunities for individuals."

Mundy calls Obama a "forceful coach." "The most powerful thing she ever taught me was to be constantly aware of my privilege," said Beth Hester, who is white. "Michelle reminded me that it's too easy to go and sit with your own. She can invite you, in kind of an aggressive way, to be all that you can be."

Frankly, I think the women in Richmond got off light. But I have a suspicion that even if Obama had wanted to beat them with a wet noodle they would have been thrilled. Her beauty, combined with the undeniably historic nature of her husband's campaign, enchanted everyone, including this hardened correspondent.

I caught the train back to Washington with a middle-aged African-American woman, obviously affluent, from Baltimore. She had come down in the morning just to see Obama. "My husband was a history buff," she confided. "I wish he'd lived to see this." ♦

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Obama in Leftland

Don't know much about history . . .

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Barack Obama is America's first major party presidential candidate to have come of age after the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and '70s. Americans who reached adulthood before or during the Cultural Revolution often differ over the big events of recent history. Americans who came of age afterward, on the other hand, don't necessarily know any recent history. And what they do know is often wrong. Every candidate makes mistakes on the stump, and voters allow for the gigantic g-forces exerted by the presidential campaign as it whirls candidates around the nation at terrific speed. But we have an obligation to ponder Obama's views of American reality in the context of his membership in the first generation fully shaped after the Cultural Revolution. Let's call it gen-CR. (The same applies to Sarah Palin, but she hasn't said the sort of crazy things Obama has.)

We know what to expect of gen-CR. Unless they have grown up in regions or families with an unusually strong grasp of tradition, patriotism, and reality, gen-CR'ers tend to have a fuzzy view of history, an unconditional belief in tolerance and diplomacy, and contempt for the military and war-making. Their patriotism (such as it is) tends to focus on the "global community" or "the planet" or some other large, meaningless object. (Beyond a certain point, patriotic devotion spread too thin simply evaporates—which is a good way to get rid of it if you are, say, an English intellectual trusting to the European Union to eradicate this primitive emotion.)

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Before considering what sets Obama apart, consider what he has in common with the former candidate he resembles most, George McGovern—both affable, well-spoken gentlemen of the Democratic left with fanatic youthful supporters, who picked the wrong running mates. (McGovern was forced to call the bullpen and send in Shriver for Eagleton partway through the campaign.) McGovern was a wartime candidate, like Obama; both planned on widespread opposition to the war and dislike of the incumbent (aka "a need for change") to power them to victory. Of course Bush is no Nixon; nor is he up for reelection. In any case, McGovern got plastered. True, Obama passes for mainstream more effectively than McGovern ever did; on the other hand, thanks to a dramatic change of commanders and strategies, the United States is now winning its far-away war against terrorist armies and murderous ideologues underwritten by foreign powers, leaving Obama stuck for a foreign policy message.

Yet all those things applied to Vietnam in 1972 just as they do to Iraq today. Thanks to the substitution of Abrams for Westmoreland in May 1968, the war was slowly and surely being won. But the final outcome was a catastrophic defeat for the United States and (even worse) for all Vietnamese who had ever counted on us. Washington politicians collaborated in that defeat. If Obama is elected, the danger is real. America had better try to understand whether he thinks for himself or is a true-blue member of gen-CR, who has been taught that losing wars is character-building and that serious Americans find their own history embarrassing (and the less you know about it, the better). Consider three Obama pronouncements.

Last July he listed crises America has faced, including "the bomb that fell on Pearl Harbor." He spoke of "constantly evolving danger," not of "enemies"; he said that we had "adapted to the threats posed by an ever-changing world," not beaten our enemies. Gen-CR recoils from the idea of enemies. As for "the bomb," Obama was presumably conflating Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. However that may be, the statement is a prime specimen of gen-CR thinking.

Obama has proposed a "civilian national security force that's just as powerful, just as strong, just as well-funded [as the military]." Later he seemed to say (maybe) that this organization would support the military in noncombat duties. But in that case, why does it have to be so powerful? Whatever he had in mind, he was obviously not bothered by the ugly historical overtones of muscular national police forces or parallel armies. History is full of such organizations, from the Committee of Public Safety wreaking bloody havoc in revolutionary Paris to the immense terror-force of the Stalinist NKVD to Mao's murderous Red Guards. Because Obama (evidently) does not listen to history, he seems to have no sense of its hints and warnings.

His announcement that he would meet Mahmoud Ahmadinejad without preconditions shows exactly why a president must not merely know history but have a decently nuanced view. It was wrong for Chamberlain to meet Hitler and foolish for JFK to meet Khrushchev, but right for Begin to meet Sadat and for Churchill to make repeated long, dangerous journeys to meet Stalin. It's obvious to all sorts of Americans—as it was obvious to Hillary Clinton at the time—that Obama's offer was dangerous and wrong, but the reasons are not easily reduced to a formula. "World leaders should not meet with other world leaders unless they know what the agenda is, so you don't end up being used," was the way Joe Biden, then an Obama opponent, put it. "Don't invest American prestige in a high-risk meeting where you are likely to

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take a bath" is another way to put it; "don't invest American prestige where it tends to legitimize an international outlaw, unless urgent American interests stand in the balance" is still another. Either way, you have to understand "American prestige"—which is not a gen-CR-type concept.

If the presidency is no place for on-the-job training, it is no place for remedial education either. The problem with Obama is not so much that he lacks experience but that he talks—like so many others of his generation—as if he had a child's view of modern history and (hence) of modern American reality. Obama's candidacy also poses a more subtle and sinister problem. He didn't create it, and it's not his fault; but it's frightening nonetheless. Start with a given: An Obama administration might still bring about defeat in Iraq; speeded-up troop withdrawals might weaken this new democracy and bring on its collapse like a burnt-out log into a blaze of terrorist violence. But if it did—*if* the left's policies proved tragically mistaken—*Obama's supporters would never know it*. What would the collapse of America's noble project in Iraq look like in the funhouse mirrors of the *New York Times*, NBC, *Time* and *Newsweek* and NPR and the rest of the establishment media? "In the end, Bush policy plunged Iraq into chaos, but Obama was smart enough to pull out before more American lives were lost." And that's what Democrats would "know" about Iraq.

In broader terms, Obama is a warning: The CR generation is now in full flood and coming on strong. Those who think that the '60s revolution has run its course, that Americans are about ready to come home and live on friendly terms with their own history and traditions, should think again. Of course Joe Biden has reassured us that you don't have to come from gen-CR to talk nonsense. (Biden last week recalled how President Roosevelt appeared on TV to calm Americans after the stock market crash of '29.) Yet Biden may well have forgotten more history than Obama ever knew.

Nothing is more traditional than change. For every "morning in America" campaign there are ten New Deals, Fair Deals, New Frontiers, Great Societies, and Kinder, Gentler Americas on offer. Youth wants change by definition. The fervor of young Bob Dylan telling us in 1963 that "the times they are a-changin'" is still sad and touching. Obama is the quintessential child of the Cultural Revolution, who grew up in a society that was up to its neck in change. Those were the big change years (Obama is small change by comparison), and some of the changes were marvelous. The near-eradication of race prejudice within a single generation is an achievement that Americans will always (or should always) be proud of. But in most other respects the Cultural Revolution was a disaster—one which is still unfolding. Obama is the herald of Phase 2, in which self-conscious leftism is

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replaced by unconscious leftism, and culture-leaders who misinterpret history by a new generation that barely knows any history to misinterpret.

Members of the CR generation who had mainstream, establishment educations have been trained like pet poodles to understand where romping is allowed and where it is forbidden. The permissible range of thought on such topics as protected minorities, protected species, protected psychosexual deviations, et al. is clearly spelled out from kindergarten onward. Young teachers in the 1970s proudly acknowledged their political biases: They were the New Left in action, on a long march through the institutions. But many of today's young teachers—in consequence of the long march's brilliant success—don't even realize that they *are* left-wing ideologues. As far as they know, their ideas are innocuous and mainstream—just like the *New York Times*!

To understand this generational shift in the making, consider the resignation of Harvard president Lawrence Summers in 2006, under attack for having said that, just possibly, the far greater number of male than of female scientists might have to do with innate differences between men and women—something that a large majority of working scientists (male and female) almost certainly take for granted (whether or not they are willing to say so). But Summers had expressed a forbidden thought, and (despite his abject confessions and apologies at the Harvard show trials) was duly banished. In the gen-CR age now approaching, such embarrassing accidents will no longer happen. Forbidden ideas simply won't occur to the Harvard presidents of the future.

Obama is the perfect model for a modern Harvard president. He might look back at his nation's history and see only a blur. But it's hard to imagine him ever thinking (much less saying) the sort of erroneous thought that doomed Summers. America's future has been intellectually housebroken. That's progress. ♦

The Example of Our Power

Bill Clinton's verbal chicanery.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

Not-so-soft power: U.S. forces enter Haiti, 1994

NEWSCOM

If you've recently taken a gander at the liberal foreign policy tomes, attended any think tank panels on America's supposed decline, or read the prolific output of today's fashionable foreign affairs thinkers, you've probably heard a lot about the virtues of "soft power." According to its main proponent, Harvard professor Joseph Nye, soft power is "the ability to attract others by the legitimacy of U.S. policies and the values that underlie them." The standard liberal critique of the last eight years of American foreign policy presumes that the Bush administration neglected soft power and emphasized military force, "hard power," to an extent unprecedented in the annals of American history. This narrative has become a defining aspect of Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

James Kirchick is an assistant editor at the New Republic.

When not criticizing the Republican nominee for his support for the Iraq war, Obama and his surrogates have gone after him for "saber-rattling" on crises ranging from the Russian invasion of Georgia to the Iranian nuclear program. This sentiment was reiterated last month by the only Democratic president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt to serve more than one term: Bill Clinton. This was surprising, given that he actually ran to the right of his Republican rivals on foreign policy.

Clinton gave one of the better speeches of the lackluster Democratic convention, and he offered one of the convention's most memorable lines—memorable because it so perfectly encapsulates the worldview of many in the Democratic party today. Following his admonition that, "Most important of all, Barack Obama knows that America cannot be strong abroad unless we are first strong at home," Clinton told

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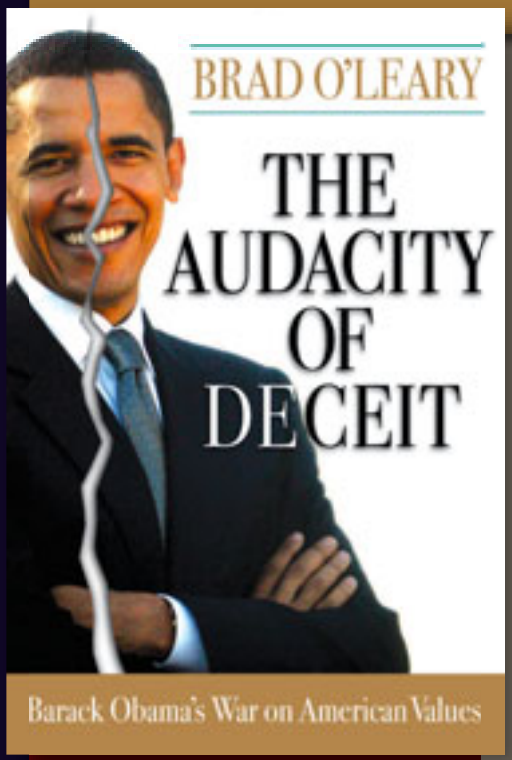
When it comes to abortion, women voters have made a clear choice...and Barack Obama disagrees with them.



If you want to see how Obama's beliefs are in stark contrast to what most women voters believe, then you MUST buy the explosive new book: *The Audacity of Deceit: Barack Obama's War on American Values.*

Go to www.BarackObamaTest.com to learn Obama's position on a broad array of issues, AND see where the rest of America stands. For example:

- Do you agree or disagree that abortion destroys a human life and is manslaughter?
  56% of women voters AGREE!
  Obama DISAGREES!
- Do you favor or oppose a woman's right to an abortion based on the sex of the fetus?
  88% of women voters OPPOSE!
  Obama FAVORS!
- Do you agree or disagree that a physician should be legally required to notify the parents of an underage girl who requests an abortion?
  74% of women voters AGREE!
  Obama DISAGREES!
- Recently, Barack Obama was asked when he thought life begins, in reference to the issue of abortion. Obama responded by saying that decision was above his paygrade. Knowing that the next president may be able to appoint two or three U.S. Supreme Court Justices, who may be called to make rulings on the issue of Abortion; do you support or oppose a president who does not know when life begins?
  58% of women voters say at CONCEPTION!
  Obama is NOT SURE!
- Do you agree or disagree with the "Freedom of Choice Act," which would wipe out all state and federal abortion restrictions including the partial-birth abortion ban?
  52% of women voters DISAGREE!
  Obama AGREES!
- Should a doctor give medical care to a fetus that survives an abortion, or should medical care not be given?
  68% of women voters say GIVE medical care!
  Obama, as a state senator, repeatedly said NO medical care!

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the assembled Democrats, "People the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power."

This sort of thing—harking back to a lost era when people the world over respected America because we weren't so mean/imperialist/greedy—is red meat for Democrats. It presumes that, rather than America's unique position in the world being the prime instigator of anger, it's instead a discrete set of policies enacted by George W. Bush which have sucked "the power" from "our example." And from this follows the usual litany of alleged administration misdeeds: the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol, the invasion of Iraq—without sufficiently "consulting of our allies"—Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, extraordinary rendition, etc.

Disagreement on these issues stems from differences over policy (or at least ought to, but many Democrats believe the foreign policy of the last eight years to be immoral). But is it really true that "people the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power"? There certainly have been times in American history when our exemplary actions reverberated more strongly abroad than concomitant displays of economic and military might. But it hasn't *always* been the case. It wasn't even the case during the Clinton administration.

Despite Democrats' rosy-hued memories, the Clinton years were hardly ones of glorious, multilateral, liberal internationalism. They were in many ways indistinguishable from the Bush years. Take Kyoto. In 1997 the Senate passed a resolution 95-0 stipulating that the United States would not become signatory to a treaty that "would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States." Clinton then never submitted it for ratification. Or take torture. The policy of extraordinary rendition—transferring terrorism suspects to countries where they face harsh interrogation and, yes, torture—was inaugurated during the second Clinton administration.

As for military intervention abroad, Clinton was one of the most interventionist presidents in American history, sending troops off to fight in more missions than any other president. From Haiti to Somalia, the Clinton administration backed up to Madeleine Albright's description of the United States as the "indispensable nation."

In Bosnia and again in Kosovo, Clinton was a firm believer in the "example of our power," having realized that America withholding its military help was "killing the U.S. position of strength in the world," as he said in 1995. He supported arming the Bosnian Muslims and deployed 20,000 American soldiers to hold the peace. In Africa, Clinton sent troops to take part in the U.N.'s mission in Somalia; withdrawing only after 18 U.S. soldiers were murdered in the streets of Mogadishu (what did that hasty retreat in the face of aggression do for the "power of our

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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example"?). Clinton and various members of his administration have apologized repeatedly for not making better use of the "example of our power" (in so many words) in Rwanda, where nearly a million people were slaughtered on his watch.

And Clinton certainly believed in the "example of our power" when it came to his relationship with Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, a foreign policy threat that frustrated him throughout his eight years in office. Fed up with the Iraqi dictator's cynical manipulation of U.N. weapons inspectors, Clinton bombed Iraq in December 1998. Whatever his criticisms of American power today, he was at times overly reliant on it, for instance, when he bombed a children's pharmaceutical factory in Sudan during the height of the Lewinsky scandal.

U.S. presidents have long deployed power to forward our ideals and protect our interests, and the Clinton administration fits rather neatly into the continuity of American foreign policy.

It is so far unclear whether Barack Obama even agrees with Clinton's lyrically composed sentiment, so incoherent has the Democratic nominee been on foreign policy. In the speech last year that earned him the fear of the Pakistani "street," Obama (wisely, in my opinion) said that under his administration the United States would attack terrorist targets in Pakistani territory if it had "actionable intelligence." His plans to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps would flaunt the "example of our power" to China. His standing in opposition to free trade agreements with strategically important allies like South Korea and Colombia contradicts a campaign narrative based upon recovering America's wounded reputation. And Obama has offered no realistic solution to the ongoing genocide in Darfur. The "power of our example," whatever that means, hasn't done much at all for the wretched masses of western Sudan.

None of this is to say, of course, that the United States cannot behave better either at home or abroad; we're far from perfect. But we're closer than most. The alleged lack of "people the world over" who are "impressed" with the United States is the result of factors far more complicated than whether we signed this or that treaty, joined the convention banning landmines, pressed for yet another toothless U.N. resolution on any given issue, or hold terrorism suspects at Guantánamo Bay or Fort Leavenworth. Much of the world will resent us no matter what we do, at least when venting to pollsters from the Pew Global Attitudes Project.

Whatever damage Democrats believe has been done to America's reputation over the past eight years, it's had nary an effect on the number of people trying to come to the United States. "People the world over," if their collective opinion on any issue can be summarized, seem to be more "impressed" by American engagement with the world and our global leadership than by vague, Clintonian pronouncements of our virtue. Just ask the Bosnian Muslims, the Kosovars, the Georgians, and any other people who have benefited from the exercise of our power, or the Darfurians and others who have been victims of our inaction. Or ask the Kurds, who have experienced both.

In Iraq, we've recently seen the significance of the power of examples—even if most Democrats are unwilling to recognize it. There, the masochistic violence of our enemies was atrocious enough to drive the local population to work with coalition forces—whose admirable service has won them the appreciation of so many Iraqis—and to fight back against the insurgency.

Clinton's pabulum, however, and its embrace by the Democratic base, betrays a misunderstanding of how terrorists, rogue states, and petty tyrants operate. The "power of our example" means nothing to them; they do not require imperfect American actions to justify authoritarianism, attacks on innocent civilians, or the flouting of all recognized norms of behavior. They will behave in such a fashion whether a Clinton or a Bush is in office. And more often than not it's only the "example of our power" that will stop them. ♦

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Capitalism's Extinction Events

Where were you the day Lehman Brothers died?

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Like most Americans, I suspect, I will always remember where I was, and what I was doing, when I learned that Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley would cease to be investment banking houses and become traditional bank holding companies.

I was sitting at my desk, in my office here at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, reading the *Wall Street Journal*. Not long before, I had absorbed the shock when their principal rivals—Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, and Merrill Lynch—had merged into larger banks or gone into bankruptcy protection. But this was, in the *Journal*'s authoritative account, something else again:

> Wall Street as it has long been known—a coterie of independent brokerage firms that buy and sell securities, advise clients and are less regulated than old-fashioned banks—will cease to exist. Wall Street's two most prestigious institutions [Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley] will come under the close supervision of national bank regulators, subjecting them to new capital requirements, additional oversight, and far less profitability than they have historically enjoyed.

It was that last note—the one about less profitability—that hit home with me. I confess that, residing hundreds of miles from Wall Street as I do, I had not often pondered the differences among institutions that buy and sell securities, or advise clients, and those saddled with stiff capital requirements and close federal regulation. But profitability is something I do comprehend, and now that these great banking houses will not be rolling in quite so much dough as before, I felt a twinge of compassion, and began to understand the severity of the crisis that has roiled the financial markets and shaken political Washington.

When asked what the market would do, J. Pierpont Morgan is supposed to have replied, 'It will fluctuate.' And so it has always done. For now, capital will be tighter than before, restricting credit—which is not always a bad thing—and businessmen will be reminded that neither bull markets nor recessions last indefinitely.

I am, of course, being sarcastic here—although, as I hasten to point out, I acknowledge that Wall Street is unquestionably suffering one of its periodic anxiety attacks and recognize that the federal government is obliged, almost exclusively for political reasons, to do something—which means to spend taxpayers' money—to promote stability and restore confidence and appear prepared to prevent the economy from falling into the abyss.

This is a well-established pattern in the history of financial upheaval—think of the period immediately following the great stock market crash of October 19, 1987—and will, I am sure, accomplish its object. But is this really the historic turning point it is advertised to be? I am not so sure.

When asked what the market would do, J. Pierpont Morgan is supposed to have replied, "It will fluctuate." And so it has always done. For the time being, capital will be tighter than before, restricting credit—which is not always a bad thing—and businessmen will be reminded (as legislators, state and federal, seem never to learn) that neither bull markets nor recessions last indefinitely.

This is a fundamental reality of capitalism that seems never to penetrate the minds of journalists or politicians: Markets expand, contract a bit, and expand again, revenue streams are not always smooth, and for economic enterprise, the cost of overconfidence can be the same as the price of inertia: swift self-immolation. What appears to be huge, venerable, and financially indestructible today can be gone tomorrow.

I was reminded of this as I listened last week to a *Financial Times* reporter explain, on television, that the travails of Bear Stearns or Lehman Brothers have little meaning for the average citizen, but that the sale of Merrill Lynch to the Bank of America would come as a shock, and push the crisis up to our doorstep.

"Merrill Lynch!" she exclaimed.

Of course, what she should have said is that this latest metamorphosis of Merrill Lynch, one of many huge brokerage concerns in America, is not so significant in itself, but that Merrill Lynch had benefited, over the years, from smart advertising campaigns ("Bullish on America") that had impressed—perhaps exaggerated—its importance to potential clients and financial journalists.

For with Merrill Lynch, as with many economic behemoths in our time, growth, corporate obesity, and sudden decline (or transformation) have been the norm, not the exception, in a dynamic economy. Speaking of smart advertising campaigns, does anybody remember "My bro-

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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ker is E.F. Hutton, and Hutton says . . ."—and where is E.F. Hutton today? For that matter, whatever happened to poor old Pierce, Fenner, and Smith of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith, as it was in its formative years in the 1950s-70s?

To take a homely example, the four great department stores of my youth in Washington—Woodward & Lothrop, the Hecht Company, Lansburgh's, and Julius Garfinckel & Co.—all prosperous, ubiquitous, and seemingly unassailable at the commanding heights of retail, are all now gone, utterly disappeared, from the marketplace. Some fell into disrepair and went out of business, others merged and lost their identity in the transaction. Have people ceased to buy things in Washington, or refrained from patronizing the merchants who replaced them? Of course not.

This is something to remember the next time you plan to book a flight on TWA or Eastern Airlines or buy a phone from Western Electric. It has been awhile since I contemplated opening a bank account at Manufacturers Hanover Trust, or traveling to Wilmington on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Who would have guessed that Gen. David Sarnoff's Radio Corporation of America (RCA) would someday exist largely as a trademark, or that the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), another invention of General Sarnoff's, would be purchased by General Electric, the light bulb people? Or ABC by Walt Disney? Or that the American Telephone & Telegraph Co. would be broken up by the government? Or that American Motors, the merger of Nash Kelvinator and Hudson Motor Cars, the company that made Mitt Romney's father rich and famous, would no longer be manufacturing Ramblers and Jeeps—in fact, would no longer exist?

The financial markets are unsteady at the moment, and Wall Street is undergoing elective surgery. But change, not stasis, is the hallmark of the free market, and now Toyota is a bigger deal than General Motors. ♦

The Enduring Power of Literature

A cautionary tale about 'change.'

BY RUTH R. WISSE

The struggle between the Obama and McCain campaigns over who claims the motto of "Change" in the current election campaign brings to mind one of the brightest moments in my university career.

When I arrived at Harvard in 1993, I began teaching a course on modern Jewish literature as part of the Core Curriculum for Literature and Arts. The course proceeds chronologically, featuring twentieth-century works in six or more languages, which let us see how variously Jewish literature interprets history, depending at least in part on the context of the language within which it is written. We read works by Sholem Aleichem, Franz Kafka, Isaac Babel, S.Y. Agnon, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Primo Levi, and Saul Bellow. Core courses are designed to provide a "general education" for the unspecialized student.

A couple of years ago a young woman came to my office hours after the very first class and introduced herself as a freshman, an African American from an inner city, who knew nothing about Jews and had studied very little literature in high school. She said that without the glossary at the back of the book, she would have understood none of the Jewish allusions that popped up in our first work—Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Dairyman*. Would she be able to master the course? When we started discussing the book it turned out that she had understood it quite well, if not in all its details. We went over some of the text together and I invited her to come back if she had more questions.

The student—let me call her Joy—began coming to my office regularly, at least once for each book on the syllabus. At first, she would arrive with a list of written questions about the works and the lectures. As the semester progressed, these were supplemented by her own interpretations, argued from copies of the books that were stuffed with as many post-its as the pages in between. I tend to fault Harvard students for not asking enough questions, as though they are more afraid to reveal their ignorance than curious to learn. Joy's eagerness to learn was never in doubt.

Joy's fresh encounters with these works made me realize how truly tough they all were. *Tevye* is difficult because the traditional Jew of the title needs a glossary as well as translation to convey his wit. Kafka and Babel involve the reader in their own cognitive, psychological, and moral crises. Agnon aspires to encompass all of Jewish experience, synchronic and diachronic, in a single work. Bashevis Singer fears the consequence of having abandoned the civilizing bounds of religious law. Primo Levi is the plainest of writers but he guides us into the hardest territory—Auschwitz. Bellow mixes laughter and trembling in combinations that assume greater maturity than most undergraduates possess.

It gave me great pleasure to follow Joy's progress through the course, but nothing prepared me for the reward of her last visit. During the reading period before exams, she dropped in with a small flurry of questions, and

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then told me that she had written her mother saying that this course had turned her into an adult. "How is that?" I asked in astonishment. "Well, this was me when I came into the course," she said: "I was go-go-go-girl! I was going to change everything. I was going to change society. I was going to change the world! Well, the course and especially the last book we read, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, showed me that I could also change it for the worse!"

I had never consciously set out to convey such a teaching, but in one of his books Saul Bellow refers to Leo Strauss's extraordinary suggestion, "The Jewish people and their fate are the living witness for the absence of redemption. This, one could say, is the meaning of the chosen people; the Jews are chosen to prove the absence of redemption." Each in his way, the writers in the course reinforce this insight, and pursuing the logic of their writings, Joy had arrived at the same conclusion. This is not to say that she intended to give up her hopes of changing the world, but that she would do it knowing how many hopefuls had changed it for the worse. ♦

Bad Books Behind Bars

An inventory of extremist Islamic texts in federal prisons. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Early this year, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced the completion of an inventory of Islamic books and videos in Muslim chapel libraries in the 105 federal correctional institutions. The bureau had undertaken the inventory at the recommendation of the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General, which in turn was responding to the concerns of terrorism experts and members of Congress who sought to end or forestall the radicalization of Muslim inmates. I obtained a copy under the Freedom of Information Act.

The inventory, which runs to 399 pages, shows a marked predominance of Wahhabi and other fundamentalist Sunni literature among the Muslim holdings of federal prison chapels. The collections also contain plentiful materials from the Nation of Islam, the extreme black nationalist movement headed by Louis Farrakhan, but Shia and Sufi works are generally absent, as are texts on broader aspects of Islamic history and culture.

This finding is significant in light of two other facts: Muslim extremists' openly stated intent to spread their ideology in prisons, and the Bureau of Prisons' own past reliance on Muslim chaplains trained in Wahhabi Islam. While no major acts of terror have been traced to recruitment in U.S. prisons, the tools necessary for extremist indoctrination remain, unaccountably, in place.

Among the authors available to inmates in federal prisons, contemporary popularizers of Islamism, including jihadist radicals, are well represented. More encouraging is the discovery that the inventory includes only half a dozen copies of the infamous Wahhabi edition of the Koran, printed in English in Saudi Arabia with interlineated extremist commentaries (see "Rewriting the Koran," THE WEEKLY STANDARD, September 27, 2004).

But the inventory shows at least 280 copies of works by Abdullah Hakim Quick, a Wahhabi-oriented fundamentalist from South Africa. These include videos of Quick preaching hateful attacks on Baha'is, as well as Ahmadis, a heterodox Muslim group, and titles like *Muslims Under Siege* and *The Importance of Da'wa in Times of Crisis*. (*Da'wa* is Islamic missionary activity. Islamists pursue *da'wa* aggressively, sometimes with the explicit goal of establishing a worldwide Islamic state or caliphate.) Quick is also known for his pseudo-historical claims for an early Muslim presence in the Americas. The inventory further lists 250 items by another South African extremist, the late Ahmed Deedat, notorious as an anti-Christian preacher, with such piquant titles as *Da'wa or Destruction*, as well as ferocious attacks on Salman Rushdie.

Federal prison chapel libraries offer some 200 volumes by the Pakistani jihadist Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-79) and approximately 200 copies of works by the eccentric Turkish Islamist Harun Yahya, who is known for donating books printed in numerous languages around the world, many of them expounding anti-Western conspiracy theories. It also lists 185 copies of offerings by a prominent North American fundamentalist, the Egyptian-born Jamal Badawi; 175 copies of titles by Imam Siraj Wahhaj, the preacher best known for spreading Wahhabism among black Americans; and 125 by Jamal Zarabozo, a white American Sunni radical. Zarabozo is the compiler of a retrograde 1996 collection of Islamic fatwas on the status of women.

Missing from the books on Islam available in federal prison chapels is any semblance of pluralism, though competing schools of thought have characterized Islam from the beginning. Even the most famous Islamic classics are slighted. The inventory shows only a dozen volumes by the

Stephen Schwartz's latest book is The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony *(Doubleday).*

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12th-century philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroës), renowned as a commentator on Aristotle. It lists fewer than half a dozen copies of texts by the philosopher Alfarabi, the great Sufi Ibn Arabi, and the historian Ibn Khaldun, and not a single book by the Islamic polymath Ibn Sina (Avicenna).

The prison library register does encompass 50 volumes by the greatest Islamic theological figure after Muhammad (and the defender of Sufism), al-Ghazali, and more than 25 copies of selections of the Sufi poet Rumi. But other classic Sufi authors are absent. Shia writers are only sporadically represented, with no more than a dozen copies of Shia classics like *The Peak of Eloquence*, the commentaries of the caliph Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and inspirer of the Shia sect. Chapel collections include some 50 English and Spanish editions of the Koran issued by the Shia publisher Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an. But these Korans do not substitute for works explaining Shia doctrine.

The inventory shows 33 copies of works by the radical cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose manual of *sharia*, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, is widely read by Sunnis. This means that approximately one in three prison chapel libraries includes this volume, habitually used to introduce new Muslims to fundamentalism.

In addition, one finds 30 copies of writings by Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), a leading light of the radical Muslim Brotherhood. Prison libraries house 9 copies of works promoting the "achievements" of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, as well as 19 copies of al-Wahhab's own *Kitab al-Tawhid* (The Book of Monotheism), the "classic" work of Wahhabi doctrine, which is incomprehensible to anybody other than a serious Islamic scholar or a person guided through an indoctrination process. The presence of this specialized text—unknown to most ordinary Muslim believers, mainstream clerics, and academics—in the libraries of roughly 25 percent of federal prisons is highly suggestive.

These books are at the disposal not only of inmates but also of the Muslim chaplains who serve them. In 2003, the Justice Department froze the hiring of Muslim chaplains after authorities realized the only Muslim organization that had "completed the paperwork required by the BOP to endorse chaplain applicants," the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), was a successor to a Saudi-backed Wahhabi group, the Muslim Students' Association. In effect, this Wahhabi outfit had become the sole screening organization for Muslim prison chaplains—including some individuals still on the payroll today.

Also in 2003, the notorious Warith Deen Umar (born Wallace Gene Marks), founder and president of the National Association of Muslim Chaplains, was finally fired after his terrorist sympathies were exposed in the *Wall Steet Journal*. Chief Islamic chaplain in the New York State prisons for 25 years until 2000 and later a contractor in the federal prison in Otisville, New York, Umar had not been terminated even after "BOP staff observed Umar repeatedly give sermons that violated BOP security policies," according to the Justice Department Inspector General's 2004 *Review of the Federal BOP's Selection of Muslim Religious Service Providers*.

That same *Review* set in motion the recently completed chapel library inventory and urged the BOP to maintain "a central registry of acceptable material" for prisons. It also urged that prospective chaplains be questioned about whether they supported violence and had ever received funds from foreign governments. But the *Review* failed to insist on the firing of extremist chaplains hired before the freeze and to establish a mechanism for the removal of offensive books and videos already in prison collections. Clearly, there is more work to be done to clean radical Islam out of U.S. prisons. ♦

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Car-seat checkpoint in Los Angeles, 2003

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Notes from the Nanny State

On the tyranny of the baby seat

By Jonathan V. Last

Sibley Memorial Hospital is generally acknowledged as the best place to have a baby in Washington, D.C. Located in the ritzy Palisades neighborhood, Sibley is just a few blocks from the Potomac, surrounded on three sides by trees. The delivery suites, outfitted with dark-wood cabinets and soothing earth tones, are more three-star hotel rooms than institutional spaces. And while the cafeteria is pleasantly passable, there are a bevy of takeout gourmet eateries within a five-minute drive, making life even more enjoyable for new moms and dads. But if you're lucky enough to deliver your bundle of joy at Sibley, the hospital has a rigorous discharge policy: They won't let your baby out the door until you demonstrate that you have a federally certified infant car seat. Though they will make an exception on the off chance you can prove you are walking home.

After you've been discharged, hospital policy gives way to D.C. law, which stipulates that children less than a year old and under 22 pounds must ride in a rear-facing, infant car seat, installed in the back of your car. Children between one and four years old may ride in a forward-facing child safety seat, installed in the back of your car. And from ages five to eight, children must use a federally approved child booster seat, also in the rear of the car. These are primary offense laws, mind you, meaning that if a police officer spots you illegally transporting children—if, for instance, you buckle your seven-year-old into the front seat for a trip to the corner store—they can pull you over and issue a citation giving you a choice of attending a $25 safety class or paying a $75 fine.

The tyranny of the car seat isn't confined to the molly-coddlers in Washington. Every state in the union has laws on the books mandating the use of car seats for infants and toddlers. Thirty-eight states now have laws also mandating the use of booster seats. If anything, the laws in the District of Columbia are on the lax side. In Massachusetts, once eight-year-olds graduate from their booster seats, they must remain in the backseat of the car, using normal seatbelts, until age twelve. In Maine, children over 40 pounds must be in a booster seat until they reach eight years of age or 80 pounds—whichever comes *last*. The penalty for violating these laws varies from state to state, ranging from $10 to $500 per infraction. (The District of Columbia also tacks two points onto your license for good measure.) In Nevada, you can be sentenced to up to 50 hours of community service.

Enforcement can be quite zealous. A few years back, the District of Columbia took to setting up roadblocks and pulling aside vehicles with car-seat-age children in order to perform random checks. The officers handed out mock summonses, instructing bad parents to attend car-seat safety classes. In 2000, Arkansas judge Doug Schrantz made news when he made an example out of Robyn Skillian, who had

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foolishly secured her three-year-old with a normal seatbelt in the back of her car. Schrantz fined Skillian $125 and ordered her to write an obituary for her daughter. You know, to teach her a lesson.

Oddly, parents are compelled to buy car seats but are discouraged from installing them on their own. Instead they are urged—by doctors, public safety advocates, even the car-seat manufacturers themselves—to have the devices professionally installed at a car-seat inspection center—usually a local firehouse or police station. Although the installation is free, it can aggravate other problems. For instance, car seats now have expiration dates. If you used a car seat for one child and want to re-use it for another, you may be out of luck. And if the car-seat installation inspector determines that your seat is past its "use by" date, they will likely refuse to install it. On parenting message boards, some people claim to have had their out-of-date car seats confiscated by the officials who were supposed to install them.

Thirty years ago, the child safety seat was a novelty device. Generations of American children had been transported sitting in a parent's lap. In the front seat, no less! But in the blink of an eye—much faster, even, than the seat belt—the child safety seat became a staple of parenting and an object of legislative fetish, an embodiment of nanny-statedom. The story of how the car seat became a fixture in our lives is a weird synecdoche for how bureaucrats, private do-gooders, and corporate America cooperate to invisibly shape and change both culture and the law.

There have been kiddie seats for almost as long as there have been cars. But the early ones were not designed, or sold, with safety in mind. They were devices to keep junior happy during the ride. The Bunny Bear Company, for example, made such child seats in the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the typical car seat was a papoose board or a plastic seat with hooks that extended outward, allowing it to hang over a seatback. Some of them, like the kiddie seat made famous by Maggie Simpson, had toy steering wheels affixed in front of the child.

In 1965 Ford introduced the first American child safety seat. (A British inventor came up with a primitive forerunner in 1962.) The Astro-Guard was sold exclusively at Ford dealerships for $29.95. The safety-conscious automaker (Ford was one of the pioneers of the seatbelt movement) touted the Astro-Guard's four-point harness system, which strapped the child into a small bucketseat. But the Astro-Guard had its problems—namely that children's heads tended to snap forward upon sudden stops.

Ford immediately went back to the drawing board. As one press release from the time charmingly noted: "Research done by Ford Automotive Safety Research Engineers, starting in the fall of 1966, involved considerable technical and scientific study best understood by engineers." The result of the engineers' understanding was the Ford Tot-Guard. Released in November 1967, the Tot-Guard certainly looked like the future. It comprised three pieces, which latched into the seats of Ford automobiles: a booster seat, a molded, tubular, plastic shield, and a removable foam pad. In the event of sudden deceleration, the child's entire body—including his head and neck—would be restrained.

The Tot-Guard took some getting used to. The brochure that accompanied its release noted that "Children often regard *confinement* of any kind as punishment, and the Tot-Guard is confining." In order to keep your child from rebelling against the Tot-Guard, Ford recommended that you:

> Let him get acquainted with the Tot-Guard in the familiar and comfortable surroundings of his home. Unwrap the Tot-Guard as a gift, a new toy. Allow a period of about three days for your youngster to become "attached" to the Tot-Guard. Roll a ball through the "tunnel" as a game . . . Your youngster will not develop hostility toward the Tot-Guard, but he may even learn to cherish it as his "thing."

Children may not have been hostile to the Tot-Guard, but parents were not overwhelmingly affectionate: Only 75,000 of the safety seats were sold in their first seven years of production. There was, however, one group that fell positively head-over-heels for the Tot-Guard.

Founded in 1965 by Seymour Charles, Physicians for Automotive Safety (PAS) was a Nader-style advocacy group. Charles and Ralph Nader were friends, actually, and it was Nader who urged Charles to form PAS in the early 1960s. PAS was devoted to combating what Charles referred to as America's "highway epidemic."

Charles was a New Jersey pediatrician, and in the early 1960s one of his young patients was killed by being thrown from a car during an accident. The child was not restrained; Charles found his mission. He began attending auto safety conferences and started to see the issue as one of public health. "The automobile is the etiological agent in an epidemic accounting for some 50,000 deaths and 4 million injuries each year," he wrote in a 1966 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Charles believed automobiles were a disease that killed children. And child safety seats could be the cure. PAS achieved a remarkable degree of influence in a short period of time. Nearly 500 doctors signed up with Charles to picket auto shows and issue warnings and press releases. Charles began testifying before Congress. Lyndon Johnson invited him to the Rose Garden ceremony where the Department of Transportation was signed into existence.

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To keep your child from rebelling against the car seat, Ford recommended letting a child 'unwrap the Tot-Guard as a gift, a new toy. Allow a period of about three days for your youngster to become "attached" to the Tot-Guard.'

PROTECT YOUR CHILD — Ford Parts and Service Division offers an infant safety carrier (foreground) through Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealers to accommodate babies up to one year of age when riding in the family car. It supplements the popular Ford Tot-Guard, for children ages one year to five (rear). The infant safety carrier is constructed of sturdy, washable polypropylene and is designed to protect babies up to 20 pounds. It features easily adjustable straps that permit complete freedom for wriggling arms and legs. In most seat-belt equipped cars, the infant carrier can be placed on either the front or rear seat, with the infant facing the seat back. However, owners of 1976-1978 Ford Motor Company or other cars equipped with front seat continuous-loop restraint systems can use the infant carrier and the Tot-Guard in the front seat only if a locking clip is used on the belt. Without this clip, both the infant carrier and the Tot-Guard should be used only in the rear seat.

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Ford announces an improved Tot-Guard in 1978.

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In the Tot-Guard, Charles found what he had been looking for: a device that he could sell—not to parents, but to the government. He lauded the Tot-Guard, giving it testimonials and claiming that if all Americans under age five were to be buckled into a Tot-Guard, more than 1,300 lives would be saved every year. A child restraint like the Tot-Guard, Charles claimed, was "just as vital and effective preventive medicine as any immunization procedures available in modern pediatrics."

In 1971, only six years after his group's founding, Charles's efforts were rewarded when the federal government issued the first standard for child safety seats: a static crash test, which the Tot-Guard passed with flying colors. By then, other manufacturers had begun producing safety-minded car seats, most notably GM's Infant Love Seat. Some efforts were better than others. In 1972, *Consumer Reports* did its first set of car-seat ratings and declared twelve of the fifteen seats it tested "Not Acceptable." But the problem remained that no matter how hard Charles and other advocates fought to get manufacturers to make better car seats, parents weren't interested in buying them. That's when another pediatrician, Robert Sanders, had an epiphany: If people wouldn't buy car seats on their own, then the government would have to force them.

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Car-seat spending amounts very roughly to $974,000 per life saved. Consider that spending the same amount on malaria prevention would save 500,000 lives—at $1,000 per life saved. Spending $200 million on providing heart disease medicines to poor countries would save 300,000 lives—at $665 a life.

Sanders's involvement in the car-seat movement was something of an accident. Bob Sanders, according to his widow, Pat, had always been a safety nut, but had never been politically active. He was, however, involved in the Tennessee Pediatric Society, where one year, by chance, he ended up chairman of the Accident Prevention Committee. As a consequence of this position, when the state formed a task force on highway safety a few months later, they invited Sanders to join. And it was on the state task force that Sanders met a man named Ed Casey.

Casey was not a physician, but he believed that child safety seats were mandated from a power above even government. As Bob Sanders Jr. explains in his excellent biography of his father, Casey believed that Deuteronomy 22:8 required the use of car seats: "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house if any fall from it." As Sanders's son wrote, "Casey thought of the parapet, or low wall or railing around the edges of a roof, as being analogous to a child restraint device itself, including its anchorage inside the car."

Sanders never shared Casey's fundamentalist views on public safety, but he did become convinced of the dangers of automobiles and the need to protect children from them.

Like Charles, Bob Sanders saw traffic accidents as a disease in need of a cure, calling them the "epidemic of our time" and likening them to polio. In 1975, Sanders and Casey drew up a bill requiring the use of car seats for children. It was a radical idea, but they found a local representative to sponsor it. It ultimately failed, and Sanders redoubled his efforts. He enlisted the help of his wife and the two began lobbying doctors across Tennessee to support another pass at the legislation. By 1977 they had assembled enough support to bring it back to the floor.

Still, there was resistance. Some parents claimed it was financially and logistically burdensome. They were not altogether wrong. Because while the car seat is objectively pro-child, it is also vaguely anti-family. If you had five small children in 1977—a situation not particularly rare back then—few vehicles could accommodate enough car seats to transport the entire brood at the same time. (In an accidental way, the car seat prefigured, and perhaps contributed in some small part, to two trends we would soon see in America: smaller families and giant SUVs.)

But most of the hesitant legislators were worried more by the specter of government intrusion into the everyday lives of citizens. In response, Sanders and the car-seat lobby argued that while no one wanted the government intruding unnecessarily into family matters, not securing children in car seats was a form of child neglect—something which the government already had a mandate to police. As Pat Sanders now explains it, "Adults can make their own choices; but children have no choice." It proved to be a powerful argument.

By the close of 1977, a compromise was struck: Tennessee would require the use of car seats until age four, but with an exception for mothers who were holding newborns in their arms. Sanders, now known as "Dr. Car Seat" (later activism would change his nickname to "Dr. Seat Belt") was triumphant because he understood that the ratchet turns only one way. Some day, compulsory car-seat usage would force even young mothers to give up the foolish practice of cradling newborns as the family car rocketed toward danger and death. As it happens, the ratchet turned faster than Sanders ever could have hoped: Four years later the "babes in arms" exception was rescinded.

With the first domino tipped, state legislatures began to fall into line. Partly this was because the epidemiological evidence in Tennessee was encouraging. Car crash deaths of children under four in Tennessee dropped from seventeen in 1978 to ten in 1981, even though only about half of the population was using child safety seats. But the bigger hastening factor was an obscure organization in the federal bureaucracy—the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA)—that was teaming with local advocacy groups to organize and lobby state legislators and entice them with federal incentive grants. At the time, NHTSA's child-restraint specialist was a woman named Elaine Weinstein. She helped put together a series of workshops across the country to teach advocates how to get car-seat laws passed in their states. In 1981, Rhode Island became the second state

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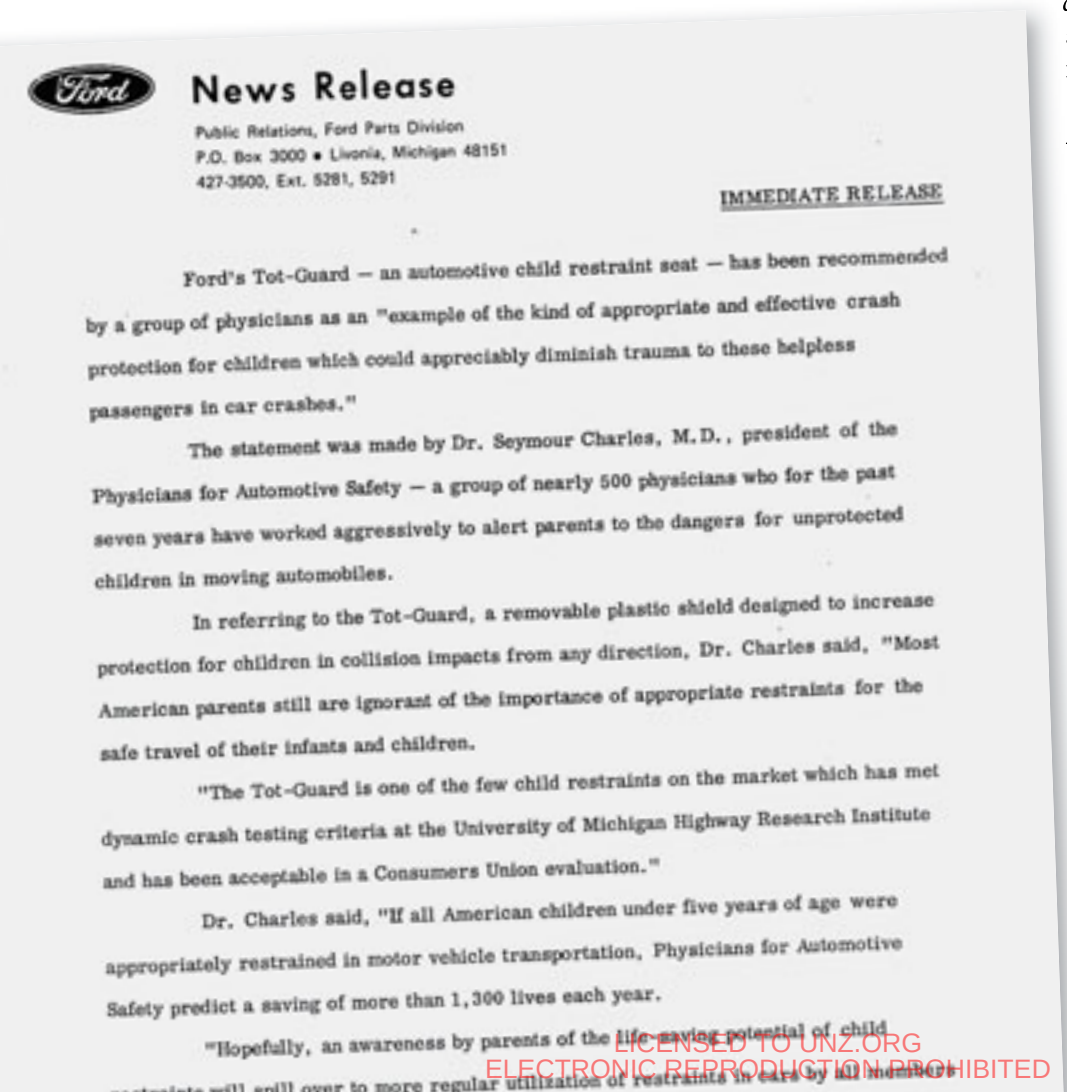
to put a car-seat law on the books. Four years later, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had some form of law mandating their use.

All of these were primary enforcement laws. But of course, that wasn't enough. Once states required the use of car seats for infants and toddlers, there was pressure to expand the zone of protection as other dangers became clear. In 1993, the increasing prevalence of airbags created concern that this new safety feature for adults was actually a hazard for children. Advocates began to request that children be relegated to the back seat, where they would be safe from airbag trauma. In Washington State in 1996, four-year-old Anton Skeen was killed after being ejected from his car during an accident, even though he was secured by an adult seatbelt. Four years later, Washington passed the first booster-seat law—the "Anton Skeen Act"—introducing a new class of required child-safety seats and raising the age during which the government claims responsibility over the transportation of children.

Booster-seat laws have caught on a little more slowly than the first car-seat laws—this spring Massachusetts became the 38th state to mandate their use. But for perspective on the rapidity of this progress, consider that doctors first started recommending the use of seat belts during the 1920s when the Automobile Safety League of America was created. It took until 1958 for seat belts to be installed as standard equipment on any cars—Saab was first—and it wasn't until 1964 that they were common in new American models. The first state law *requiring* the use of seat belts didn't come until 1984, and even today, while all 50 states have some form of seat-belt statute, only half of them are primary offense laws.

You might think, then, that the car-seat forces would be basking in this accomplishment. (Though, once a crusader, always a crusader: With the child safety seat a total triumph in American law and culture, Seymour Charles turned his attention to campaigning against medical insurance companies and handguns. Bob Sanders went on to campaign for seat belt laws, health care reform, and environmental protection.) Yet you would be wrong. Because it turns out that while it's one thing to tell people that they need car seats and another to require that they use them, even the full force of law isn't enough to make sure that America's dull little Babbitts actually use their car seats *correctly*. And this last problem is a continuing source of frustration for car-seat champions.

In 1983, the Physicians for Automotive Safety were exasperated to discover that, despite all of their hard work, parents were misusing their car seats at alarmingly high rates. Despite the fact that car seats were being used by virtually all parents (at least through age three), very few parents were using them "satisfactorily." One NHTSA study in 1996, for instance, suggested that 80 percent of child safety seats "had one or more things wrong with how they were being used." The government would have to fix that, too. In 1995 NHTSA established a blue-ribbon panel to provide recommendations on both child safety seat technology and education. The panel



Ford

News Release

Public Relations, Ford Parts Division
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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ford's Tot-Guard — an automotive child restraint seat — has been recommended by a group of physicians as an "example of the kind of appropriate and effective crash protection for children which could appreciably diminish trauma to these helpless passengers in car crashes."

The statement was made by Dr. Seymour Charles, M.D., president of the Physicians for Automotive Safety — a group of nearly 500 physicians who for the past seven years have worked aggressively to alert parents to the dangers for unprotected children in moving automobiles.

In referring to the Tot-Guard, a removable plastic shield designed to increase protection for children in collision impacts from any direction, Dr. Charles said, "Most American parents still are ignorant of the importance of appropriate restraints for the safe travel of their infants and children.

"The Tot-Guard is one of the few child restraints on the market which has met dynamic crash testing criteria at the University of Michigan Highway Research Institute and has been acceptable in a Consumers Union evaluation."

Dr. Charles said, "If all American children under five years of age were appropriately restrained in motor vehicle transportation, Physicians for Automotive Safety predict a saving of more than 1,300 lives each year.

"Hopefully, an awareness by parents of the life-saving potential of child restraints will spill over to more regular utilization of restraints in cars by all members

The press release announcing the Ford Tot-Guard, which was going to save '1,300 lives each year.'

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recommended a standardized course designed to "teach the fundamentals of [child safety seat] use to safety professionals and other interested parties." These educated individuals could then go forth and spread the good news to the rest of the public.

Taking this advice to heart, NHTSA spent a year and a half developing and testing a curriculum for teaching the installation and use of car seats. The resulting coursework consists of 32 hours of instruction, at the end of which, trainees might then become certified to install car seats. NHTSA subsequently revised this education process twice, in 2001 and 2004.

The fruit of this labor was a 2006 study showing that improper car-seat usage had fallen just eight points, to 72 percent. This persistence suggests that either the car seat had become impossibly complicated; the government was bumping up against diminishing returns; or today's parents are particularly daft. Or perhaps all of the above.

Whatever you think about the car-seat regime, its benefits are undeniable. Child safety seats reduce the risk of death in car crashes by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers. Which means that, during the 30 years between 1975 and 2005 (which includes ten years when car-seat laws were not prevalent), 7,896 young lives were saved by car seats. Every one of them, of course, is precious and we are grateful to have those little souls with us. Yet at the same time, one is struck by the modesty of the number. Charles had predicted that more than 1,300 children would be saved every year by car seats—that would have been 39,000 young lives saved, not 7,900. And Sanders had likened childhood deaths by auto accident to the polio epidemic. This, too, somewhat overstated matters: In 1916, 6,000 Americans were killed by polio. The American polio epidemic reached its height in 1952 when 3,145 Americans died from the disease and 21,269 were left paralyzed. The gains of the car seat have been more modest.

And the costs have not. It is difficult to fully comprehend the costs associated with the car-seat regime. There is no knowing, for instance, how much money the government has spent on the project, either through education or enforcement. The best, though imperfect, way to examine the matter is by looking at the amount of money consumers have spent on the devices over the years.

A 1995 study, published in the *Journal of Consumer Policy*, made the case that, as a matter of public health, child safety seats were quite cost effective. Using sales data and accident data from 1987, the study calculated not the cost per life saved, but the cost per *life year* saved. Because car-seat sales totaled only about $3 million in 1987, and because each child saved adds a great number of life years, the study concluded that car seats were more cost effective in buying life years than, for example, dialysis treatment.

A cruder survey of the data today looks somewhat different. The Juvenile Products Manufacturing Association reports that in 2004, 5,412,000 child safety seats were sold in the United States, totaling $423 million in sales. In 2005, sales rose to $429 million. During those periods, according to NHTSA, 455 children's lives were saved in 2004 and 420 lives were saved in 2005. (In 2006, sales jumped to $559 million, but we do not have data for the number of lives saved that year.) This is only crude, back-of-the-envelope estimating—and it ignores injuries prevented, constant dollars, dollars spent on car seats in previous years which are still in use, etc.—but to get a sense of the order of magnitude, that's something like $974,000 per life saved. Because this guestimate ignores dollars spent on car seats in previous years, the real number would almost certainly be greater. Just for comparison, consider that, according to studies by the Disease Control Priorities Project, spending $500 million on malaria prevention—bed nets, drugs, etc.—would save 500,000 lives. That's not $1,000 per life year, but $1,000 *per life*. Spending $200 million on providing heart disease medicines to poor countries would save 300,000 lives—$665 a life. But if you want to get back to life years, Bjorn Lomborg's Copenhagen Consensus calculates that $1 million, spent wisely, could save as many as 100,000 life years in the developing world.

Yet the push for greater car-seat safety continues. Elaine Weinstein, who helped organize the passage of the first state car-seat laws while at NHTSA, is now director of the Office of Safety Recommendations and Advocacy at the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), where she's trying to fit together the last few pieces of the car-seat puzzle. If Drs. Charles and Sanders were the founding fathers of the movement, Weinstein is the car seat's godmother. She is not some sort of hectoring busybody. A kind, intelligent woman, she is in many ways everything we might hope for in a public servant.

From 1970 to 1980, Weinstein worked for NHTSA, helping state and local grassroots organizers work to pass the first sets of laws requiring the use of car seats. As the last of those first-generation laws were going on the books, Weinstein left the government to work for a nonprofit group, the National Child Passenger Safety Association, where she was able to advocate on behalf of car seats from the other side of the table. Eventually she returned to government, serving on the NTSB, a division with a much broader purview than NHTSA. You see, where NHTSA is responsible for merely setting government regulations, the

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The District of Columbia sets up roadblocks and pulls aside vehicles with car-seat-age children in order to perform random checks on car-seats. Officers hand out mock summonses, instructing bad parents to attend car-seat safety classes.

NTSB's portfolio is more global. They can issue safety recommendations to other federal agencies or to state governments, to private industry—to whomever they want, really. It was from her perch at NTSB that Weinstein was able to first push for the establishment of booster-seat standards all the way back in 1991, when she saw the airbag crisis looming on the horizon.

Today Weinstein works to solve the perpetual problem of improper usage rates. She's also working to bring the last few states without booster-seat laws onboard. And then, the NTSB will begin trying to get states with weak booster-seat laws to strengthen their statutes in order to cover children up to eight years old—there's that ratchet again. Thus far, the NTSB hasn't found any evidence that child safety seats are required after age eight. So perhaps we've reached the terminus of the car-seat project. Asked if the booster seats are the last needed measure, Weinstein says that research says "there's no evidence of the need to expand beyond [booster seats at] age eight."

But as another NTSB expert noted more cautiously, "In the advocacy world, they're really pushing the 'Five Step Test.'" This standard de-emphasizes age in favor of an evaluation of the child's body positioning in an adult seatbelt. Typically, children have to be somewhere above 4'9" and 80 pounds to pass the Five Step Test. (Thereby making them eligible to leave their car booster seat behind and use a normal seatbelt—in the back of the car, of course.) According to growth chart data from the CDC, a 50th percentile child would not meet both of these requirements until around the age of eleven. A move to the Five Step Test would probably result in a further extension of the car-seat regime, since a quarter of twelve-year-old girls weigh less than 80 pounds.

There's no future in bellyaching about the car seat. It will only become more prevalent as the nanny state—I use the term descriptively, not pejoratively—continues to educate us about the dangers of transporting our progeny. But while it's a waste of time trying to turn back the clock, it is instructive to ask why the car seat became indomitable.

Part of the answer is garden-variety political expediency: What lawmaker was going to stand *against* saving the lives of children? Might as well campaign against puppies and ice cream. And it would be easy to cluck about how the squeaky activists get the legislative grease. The work of Drs. Charles and Sanders is actually a testament to the American way: If you organize a small number of people and lobby the government fiercely enough about something others generally don't care about, you'll usually get some satisfaction.

On a deeper level, however, one gets the sense that modern American parents actually *want* to be told what to do with their children. Babies don't come with instruction manuals, a fact lamented throughout the ages. But in generations past, while babies didn't have manuals, parents usually had several babies—and so eventually learned parenting by experience, through trial and error. They discovered what worked, and what didn't, and learned in the process that children are not made of glass.

The central fact of modern America—the modern world, really—is the steady and uniform decline in fertility rates. In 1910, the average white American woman had 3.42 children during her lifetime. (There is no general fertility rate for American women in these years when census data was still broken out by race: In 1910, the average black woman had 4.61 children.) Today, the average American woman has 2.09 children. When people have only one or two children, it's harder to learn from experience. You look for help. And as we enter a period where, for the first time in American history, even most grandmothers had only one or two children, the government is a logical place to look to for guidance. After all, the government looks after us in our dotage, why shouldn't it instruct parents on how to care for us in our infancy?

Like most intrusions of the government into the private sphere, the great car-seat revolution is a mitigated success. It's generally very good that children now use safety seats. Lives have been saved (though not nearly as many as had been promised). But while safety is a rational public good, should it be the paramount public good? It should not need saying, but there are things in life more important than safety. Some of them are bedrock ideals, such as freedom. Some of them are quotidian matters, such as convenience. After all, we would be safer if cars could not exceed 15 mph. For that matter, we would be safer if we strapped on helmets every time we left the house.

But let's not go giving anyone ideas. ♦

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The Return of l'Histoire

The New Anticapitalist party breathes (poisonous) life into the French left

Olivier Besancenot: Anticapitalists of the world, unite!

STEPHANE DE SAKUTIN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

By Michel Gurfinkiel

Paris

Nicolas Sarkozy's greatest stroke of luck so far in his brief tenure as president of France has been the disintegration of his principal opposition, the Socialist party.

In last year's election, Sarkozy defeated a charismatic, if somewhat eccentric, Socialist, Ségolène Royal, who took 47 percent of the vote. The week after the election, François Hollande, the Socialist party leader and the father of Royal's four children, separated from her—both personally and politically—and made it clear that he intended to be the party's next presidential candidate.

Michel Gurfinkiel, a French writer and journalist, chairs the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Paris.

Royal wasn't having it. Not only would she run again, she insisted, but she would wrest the party apparatus away from Hollande. Bertrand Delanoë, the popular mayor of Paris, meanwhile declared his own candidacy (he describes himself as "*socialiste et libéral*," loosely translatable as "libertarian socialist"). Younger Socialist comers, like Pierre Moscovici, a former minister for European affairs, and Julien Dray, Royal's former *éminence grise*, stepped into the fray. Not to mention Martine Aubry, the mayor of Lille, who, as minister for social affairs 10 years ago, masterminded the statute that makes it illegal in France to work more than 35 hours a week. While the Socialists can still win local elections—they creamed Sarkozy's party in municipal elections in March—they currently have no national leaders capable of prevailing in national elections, whether for president or parliament.

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But what if another party of the left were to replace the Socialists, or even just give them some competition? Until recently, this would have seemed far-fetched. Not any more. Meet Olivier Besancenot, the 34-year-old mailman and spokesman for the small Trotskyite Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) who has just emerged as the founder and leader of the New Anticapitalist party (*le Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste*, NPA).

According to a recent OpinionWay/*Le Figaro*/LCI poll, 17 percent of the French are considering supporting him. Bertrand Delanoë gets only 13 percent, Ségolène Royal 9 percent. Among Socialist and other left-wing voters, Besancenot's rise is even more dramatic: Twenty-six percent already see him as the "best opposition leader," whereas Delanoë gets 19 percent, Socialist chairman François Hollande 10 percent, and Royal 9 percent. Moreover, 65 percent of all respondents say they have a "very positive" opinion of him.

The chief reason for Besancenot's popularity is that, like Barack Obama (to quote Michelle Obama), "he's cute." With his boyish face, broad smile, and big eyes, Besancenot appeals to his generational peers, women, and even older people, who tend to see him as their virtual son. This has not escaped the talk show hosts, who are eager to have him on the air as often as possible, as if he were a rock star or supermodel. (Incidentally, the same holds true on the right: Rama Yade, a lovely young woman of Senegalese descent, is one of the most popular and media-friendly ministers in the Sarkozy government.)

Another reason for Besancenot's popularity is that he is supposedly working class. He got a job with the French postal service in 1997, when he was 23. Technically, he still qualifies as a mailman and earns less than 1,200 euros a month. That allows him to dress casually when he's on TV, use down to earth language, and dismiss other guests as "members of the elite." In fact, though the public doesn't know it, this is largely a fraud.

Besancenot's popularity has already borne fruit: the transformation of the tiny LRC into the suddenly chic New Anticapitalist party. Pollsters say the NPA may draw from 10 to 20 percent of the vote. That would secure it a voice in local and regional assemblies and seats in the European parliament, though not necessarily a breakthrough to the French National Assembly, given the complexities of French electoral law. Much will depend on the NPA's long-term relationship with the Socialists.

For most of the 20th century, the French left was split between the Socialists, who remained committed to democracy and the rule of law, and the Communists (PC), who called for the dictatorship of the proletariat. After 1945, the Socialists supported NATO and European integration, whereas the Communists aligned themselves with the Soviet Union and resisted European unification as an "American capitalist plot."

The last great Socialist leader, François Mitterrand, although himself a moderate, if not a closet conservative, determined in the 1960s that the Socialists would have to enter a coalition with the Communists in order to win elections. The strategy worked beautifully in 1981, when Mitterrand was elected president and the Socialists secured a majority in the National Assembly.

But there was an unintended consequence: The Communist party, the junior partner in the government, started to erode. (It turns out you can't be a revolutionary party and a governing party at the same time.) The PC fell from 20 percent of the national vote to less than 5 percent today. Marie-George Buffet, the secretary general of the party, gets about 1 percent in the polls. Some former Communists have joined the Socialist party, but most true believers have opted for an array of far left groups: no less than three Trotskyite mini-parties, a chaotic Green party, and some other cult-like splinter organizations.

Clearly, Besancenot's aim is to reunite the former Communists and restore their political weight. He is getting support from all sides. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the French-German icon of the 1968 student revolution in France and a leader of the German Green party, backs him. So does, apparently, Nicolas Hulot, the French Al Gore (a TV anchorman who launched a big "nonpolitical ecology awareness" movement two years ago). José Bové, the self-styled "organic farmer" who made his name attacking McDonald's, jumped on board too. Even more important, Clémentine Autain, once the great hope of the moribund Communist party and a feminist activist, has signed up with the NPA. And as for the recently paroled Jean-Marc Rouillan, the former head of Action Directe, a terrorist group responsible for several murders in the 1970s, Besancenot let it be known that the two had lunch together recently.

Politics being what it is, Besancenot's rise is seen for the moment as a plus by the Sarkozy camp. The president himself is reported to have described the New Anticapitalist party as "our own National Front trick." The reference is to the far-right National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, which exerted undue influence in French politics from 1983 to 2007. While ostensibly anti-Socialist, the party actually helped the Socialists win elections by dividing and weakening the French right. It is widely believed that Mitterrand himself (who maintained ties with the far right throughout his career) engineered the whole thing, seeing to it that the National Front received help of many kinds and encouraging the media to cover it. What Sarkozy seems to be saying is that Besancenot's New Anticapitalists in turn will divide and weaken the French left,

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and thus help the right win the crucial 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections.

But Le Pen was never Mitterrand's poodle. Likewise, Besancenot is not going to be a Sarkozy man *in partibus*. Consider his actual, unauthorized biography.

First, he has no working class background at all. His parents were solidly middle class (his father was a high school teacher and his mother a school psychologist). He went to college—Nanterre University in Greater Paris—and earned an M.A. in contemporary history. He is first and foremost a Revolutionary Communist League apparatchik who joined the working class at the party's request, first as a supermarket warehouse worker and then as a mailman, in order to acquire the politically necessary proletarian credentials. Tellingly, he was co-opted to the LCR's Central Committee in 1996, before he went to work for the postal service.

Olivier Besancenot, media darling

PHOTOTHÈQUE ROUGE / JMB

Besancenot, moreover, never actually worked much as a mailman. Under French law, workers are entitled to long leaves, on full salary, if they serve as officers of unions or political parties. Besancenot is both. And he knows how to make the most of it. He has been on leave almost continuously, either as a union activist or as an LCR figure—assistant to an LCR member of the European Parliament, party spokesman, or presidential candidate. This was his real job, and it was much better paid than his nominal job at the postal service. As a European Parliament assistant, he apparently made 5,000 euros a month.

Besancenot's private life is even more intriguing. His early rise within the LCR was due in large measure to the fact that he was living with a daughter of Alain Krivine, the group's founder and head, who himself ran for president as a Trotskyite in 1969 and 1974. Besancenot later separated from her, but remained Krivine's protégé. Then he met his current companion, Stéphanie Chevrier. A radical activist, Chevrier, 38, is also a top editor at the publishing house Flammarion and reportedly makes 10,000 euros a month with numerous perks. She owns an apartment in Paris on the exclusive Left Bank, where she lives with Besancenot. Her contacts in the French media have apparently been crucial in her common-law husband's meteoric rise.

To whom—one may ask, then—do Krivine, Chevrier, and Besancenot ultimately answer?

From its very inception in the 1960s, Krivine's Revolutionary Communist League was closely tied to the Castro regime in Cuba. Today, Besancenot describes Cuba as a "truly progressive" society. He coauthored a book in praise of Che Guevara in 2007. Last spring, shortly before launching the NPA, he visited his "friends" in Havana, where he "met with various militants." On May 6, in an interview with *Rouge*, the LCR magazine, he praised the "internationalist" dimension of the Cuban Revolution.

Chevrier, too, has connections with the Cuban regime. After majoring in literary studies at the Sorbonne, she lived and traveled extensively in Latin America. Upon her return to France in the late 1990s, she continued to maintain close ties with Castroite intellectuals in Cuba, Latin America, and Europe and was actively involved with the Fondation Copernic, an anti-globalist think tank that paved the way for the NPA.

The Castro regime, of course, was a Soviet proxy for some 30 years, from the early 1960s to 1991. In the beginning, its main task was to help the KGB infiltrate New Left groups, including Trotskyite parties, both in Western countries and in the Third World, and to make sure they aligned themselves with the Soviet Union, not China. Later on, Cuba was assigned an even more ambitious mission: to supervise and coordinate guerrilla and terrorist networks, including Islamic networks, under KGB guidance.

The Soviet empire disintegrated in 1991. The KGB networks, however, have continued to operate, both inside and outside Russia. And Havana continues to serve as a capital in exile for many of them. This accounts for both the spread of Castroite regimes in Latin America in recent years and the consolidation of a global anti-Western alliance, from Hugo Chávez in Venezuela to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran.

It may also explain the current attempts to resurrect hard left parties in Europe, whether Die Linke in Germany or the NPA in France. In any event, commenting on the recession in France last month, Besancenot expressed confidence that things were ripe once more for "good old revolution." ♦

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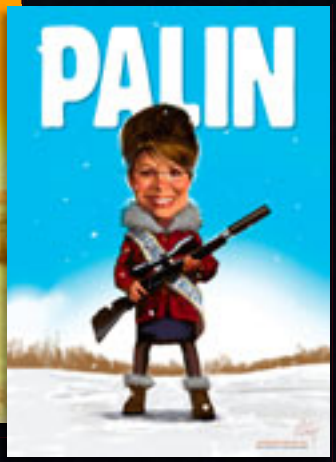

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The 10th Mountain Division on patrol, Karadah, 2008

Darkness at Noon

A premature report from Iraq

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

The second Iraq war, unlike the first, has produced a lot of books. It has not yet, however, provoked a great work—a personal and historical voyage into the conflict that mesmerizes and illuminates. Nothing yet has come close to the beauty of Michael Kelly's *Martyr's Day: Chronicle of a Small War*, an account of America's first collision with Saddam Hussein. Kelly wove together and expanded his numerous filings into a seamless story that was both a Naipaulian travelogue—Kelly's eye for small details that denote big things astonishes—and a war journal recounting everybody's suffering with tenderness and mordancy.

In *The Forever War*, Dexter Filkins aims large, a *tour d'horizon* of America's battles since 2001. An intrepid, war-weary *New York Times* correspondent, he was in Afghanistan with the Lion of the Panjshir, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and his enemies in 1998; he was there when the Taliban fell; and most tellingly, he was in Iraq for three-and-a-half years, from the invasion in March 2003 through August 2006. In Baghdad, Filkins served with the *Times*'s bureau chief, John F. Burns, the most literate and historically sensitive foreign correspondent in the English-speaking press. His other colleague, Michael Gordon, provided the finest military coverage of the Iraq war, and in *Cobra II* the reference work for assessing the conflict's battlefield maneuvers.

The Forever War
by Dexter Filkins
Knopf, 384 pp., $25

So the bar is high for Filkins: He is not some callow reporter writing with disbelief about the daily life of Baghdad's Green Zone and the ineptitude of the Anglo-American occupation. Filkins knows the good, the bad, and the ugly of what happens when men organize to kill each other. He knows that Americans have enormous faults.

It is with this standard in mind that *The Forever War* disappoints. Filkins's problems are both mechanical and spiritual. He aggravates the reader, achieving far less as a writer than he should, in large part because the style of his writing—edgy, popping sentences that are meant to rake the reader's nerves and not threaten anyone's attention span—does an injustice to what Filkins has experienced. *The Forever War* isn't really a book with a beginning, middle, and an end, but a collection of hurried vignettes that may well represent the continuing jumble of Iraq in the author's mind.

Filkins makes a telling confession after he's returned to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he lives. He's talking to another American reporter who had been in Iraq, who was finding it difficult

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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to talk about Iraq with people who'd not been there.

"I told him," Filkins writes, "I couldn't have a conversation with anyone who hadn't been there about anything at all."

We can easily appreciate the all-consuming nature of Filkins's Iraqi life, but it isn't literarily a wise choice for him to transfer his anxiety, restlessness, guilt, and confusion to the reader without a more reflective, historical filter. His frenetic, eyewitness Mesopotamian sojourn inevitably wears Filkins out. It exhausts the reader, too.

Filkins leads us to hope that this blood-soaked voyage through Afghanistan and Iraq will help answer big questions about evil. On Afghanistan before the fall of the Taliban, he writes:

> [I went] to see what human beings were really capable of, what they could do to each other . . . I went to watch. I went so I could go all the way to the bottom, into the blackest pit of the human way . . . to throw open the door and see what was inside, to smell it, to turn it over in my hands, to feel the heat of its terrible essence.

And Afghanistan is an appetizer for what's coming in Iraq. Yet by the end of the book, we know no more about man's dark side than we did at the beginning. Iraq and Algeria are the two great killing fields in modern Arab history, where traditional Arab-Islamic ethics, which largely kept Muslim societies from going berserk, utterly broke down, allowing for organized carnage and personal savagery that rival the worst of the West. (The Taliban's brutality is, so far, prosaic and primitive by comparison.)

Why has modern Iraq produced such barbarism? Is it just its passionate embrace of imported national socialism, or is it something deeper? The Fascist French pre-empted and surprised German Nazis with their enthusiasm for the Final Solution, but it's pretty difficult to imagine the French, even at their very worst, executing the Holocaust from scratch. In the 1930s and '40s there was something special about the Austrians and Germans. If Iraqis now have a higher savage quota than most, if they can't recover because of tribalism or religion from Baathist totalitarianism, then the enormous American effort to bring representative government to Mesopotamia would appear to be doomed. The stunning success of the surge is just a respite.

Surrounded by a daily symphony of suicide-bombers, Filkins by autumn 2006 appears to have lost hope. He doesn't anticipate that al Qaeda's excesses will change the sympathies and calculations of Iraq's pro-insurgent Sunni community; he does not really see the rise of the Sunni "Awakening," or the weakening of anti-Sunni Shiite anger after the Shiite victory in the Battle of Baghdad during 2006 and 2007. He cannot envision General Petraeus's surge and how it will propel all the other factors into a startling reduction in violence and tepid-but-intensifying late-night inter-communal negotiations.

In discussing the tactics of an idealistic American colonel, Nathan Sassaman, a tough and rule-bending commander who was reprimanded by Lt. General Raymond Odierno for allowing his men to go too far with the use of "non-lethal" force, Filkins suggests that, by 2006, nothing militarily can be done to save Iraq. He worries, then, about "not only what the Americans were doing to Iraq, but what Iraq was doing to the Americans."

Filkins has the bad luck to bring out a book of such unremitting darkness when rays of light are appearing. Yet Filkins could have rapidly inserted a closing chapter making a more nuanced somber assessment of where Iraq might go—and suggesting more strongly that it may be Afghanistan, not Iraq, that will be forever at war. He recently published a long, sensitive essay in the *Times* about how disorienting it was to be back in Iraq where violence had dropped by 90 precent. Filkins was "jarred in the oddest way possible: by the normal, by the pleasant, even by hope." Until the trip this summer, too late to send revisions to the publisher, Filkins just couldn't quite believe that evil had not triumphed.

Filkins isn't an ideological antiwar reporter, always trying to set the stage to prove a point, so it's difficult to know what he is trying to say since he is such a visual journalist. Photo-journalism—of which Filkins's is the print equivalent—isn't a nuanced art; graphic war photography unavoidably renders even "the best of wars" into a losing cause.

Filkins tells us he filled up 561 notebooks that, in some fashion, went into this book—which probably would have been much deeper if he'd filled up far fewer. He constantly touches on intriguing men and women who cry out for more time and homework. (In particular, religious Iraqis quickly come into view and just as quickly vanish.) He isn't comfortable with religious Muslims, which puts him in the company of most Western journalists.

The Forever War would be much better at describing what makes Iraqis and Afghans tick—and the odds of eventual national salvation and peace—if its author had been able to spend more time with men and women who think about God as much as they think about anything else. It's not a question of empathy—Filkins appears to be an empathetic fellow—but of personal preferences, patience (talking to the devout takes a lot more time than talking to the less faithful), and, perhaps, personal security.

Filkins does better with Ahmad Chalabi, the most notorious secular Iraqi. He spends more pages on Chalabi than he does on any other individual because he knows that Chalabi is an excellent vehicle for prying into post-Saddam Iraq:

> Chalabi was someone whom I never missed a chance to follow around. It wasn't just that he was brilliant, or nimble, or ruthless or fun. When I looked in Chalabi's eyes and saw the doors and mirrors opening and closing, I knew that I was seeing not just the essence of the man but of the country to which he'd returned. *L' état, c'est lui.* Chalabi was Iraq.

Well, then, give us more.

Tell us something about Chalabi that we don't know. Chalabi has become a cliché in the West—"gamesman, exile, idealist, fraud"—and his prewar influence along the Potomac has been wildly exaggerated by critics of the Iraq war. Filkins, too, engages in a bit of historical silliness by writing that "Chalabi

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had persuaded the American government to go to war to topple Saddam. Then Iraq imploded, and the super weapons Chalabi assured the United States were there never turned up."

George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, George Tenet, and Kenneth Pollack—the former Clinton administration official who wrote the most influential book arguing for war against Saddam and who spent much of the 1990s trashing Chalabi's intelligence value and his efforts to get the United States to support a "rollback" guerrilla campaign against the Baathist regime—formed their reasons for eliminating Saddam without any help from the Iraqi "Proteus." Anyone who thinks Chalabi conned Paul Wolfowitz (who grew cool towards Chalabi *before* the Iraq invasion), who then conned Rumsfeld into the Iraq war, should not be allowed to drink, drive, or watch a PG movie. I have a strong suspicion that Filkins, like his colleague John Burns, supported the war in 2003. Was Chalabi a pivotal influence on them? Unlikely.

Talking about Chalabi is a litmus test for writers, a way to gauge how far they have moved from the antiwar rhetorical swamp that has made far too many gifted intellectuals and reporters sound like Frank Rich. Anyone with a literary itch ought to want to look at Chalabi. He is a voracious intellect who was never completely at home in the West, even though most of him is of Occidental manufacture. More than any other big-paper reporter, Filkins tries to give Chalabi-in-Iraq his due:

> No Iraqi leader worked harder than Chalabi. Many of them worked for a few hours in the morning and slept away the afternoons. Many of them, as the chaos deepened, returned to exile. Whenever I went to Chalabi's house, night or day, I found him working, often on the most mundane aspects of public administration.

Filkins ultimately finds Chalabi, like Iraq, unknowable: too many doors, too Levantine, too big an IQ that allowed him to play politics and people like "three-dimensional chess," leaving normal humans wondering whether they'd been "conned and charmed into submission."

This is a pity. There is a bit too much of this Iraq-is-an-Oriental-labyrinth in Filkins's writing. It is part of his sense of hopelessness. Knowing Iraq is certainly hard, vastly harder than trying to understand a Western country at peace. But Iraq is no different from any other land: With the right tools and patience, one can pry it open. Americans got into a mess in Mesopotamia in part because American generals like John Abizaid and George Casey bought into the notion that Iraq was too complicated for Americans to understand, and that we always do more harm than good by trying to insert ourselves more deeply into Iraqi society. Perhaps not coincidentally, this view rescued the U.S. military from having any responsibility for the bloodbath that was occurring outside of America's heavily fortified bases.

Chalabi is no different than Filkins. In March 2003 they both started a crash course on Mesopotamia. What makes Chalabi a magnetic character is that he's actually more open, more accessible, more comprehensible, and even more truthful than most in explaining what he has learned. Chalabi would probably not admit that he is a student: He always wants the observer to believe that he is the baptismal font. Kanan Makiya, the chronicler of Baathist totalitarianism and Arab intellectual decline, believes that Chalabi might possibly have held Iraq together in 2003-04 if both he and the Americans had acted more wisely.

I'm not convinced—Chalabi probably couldn't win an election in Iraq even if he were the only man running—but Makiya's point that Chalabi was perhaps the only Iraqi who potentially had the skills, intellect, international ties, and all-critical family connections to process all that was going on is probably more true than false. Filkins deserves credit for trying to understand this radioactive personality; I just wish he'd been less conventional about it.

With all his literary problems, Filkins *is* still well worth reading. And for those who want to digest an eyewitness rendering of the savagery and sadness that befell Iraq between 2004 and 2007 (and all of us should) there is no more upsetting account published. Filkins was scarred by Iraq: A young Marine lance corporal, William Miller, died helping him and a colleague get a photograph of a *dead* Iraqi, quite likely saved Filkins's life in the process, and Filkins can't shake the guilt and fortuity surrounding the corporal's death. His spiritual wounds haunt the book and certainly make it, at times, a compelling read.

No other writer has been as sardonically descriptive of Iraq's unbelievable routine bloodletting: The scattering of eerily life-like severed heads and intact spinal columns of suicide bombers, and the lexical creativity required to deal with all this killing:

> The insurgents were always looking for a new and improved way to deliver a bomb. First came the car bombs, then the suicide bombers, then the car bombs driven by suicide bombers. Every time the insurgents figured out a new delivery system the Americans gave it a new acronym. Or most of the time. Car bombs, for instance, were VBIEDs, pronounced VEE-BID, for Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive Device. Suicide bombers were called SVBIEDs, for Suicide Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device. I never heard the acronym for suicide bombers on bicycles; they rode them into weddings and funerals. The insurgents hid bombs underneath dead animals, especially dogs. No acronym for that. And then they strapped bombs to dogs. Live bombs to live dogs. That would be DBIED, or Dog-born IED. Also, the D could have stood for Donkey, when they tied bombs to donkeys.

Filkins ran incessantly along the Tigris in Baghdad, at considerable risk to himself, to escape from the boredom of the claustrophobic, heavily guarded *Times* compound and, no doubt, to sweat out the ugliness and demons that inevitably become the bedrock of the mordant humor that sustain life in surreal circumstances. It's a good bet that, no matter where Filkins goes in the future, he will be forever running in Baghdad.

This was his war, and there is no chance in hell that it will ever let go of him. ♦

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Have a Heart

The use and misuse of the (deceased) human body.

BY CHERYL MILLER

To be cured by the hangman's noose did not always have so ominous a sound.

Throughout the Middle Ages, executioners routinely dissected the bodies of their victims, and sold the various parts as medicinal remedies. Human fat, rendered from the bodies of criminals, was used to treat a variety of ailments, including broken bones, sprains, and arthritis. For those suffering a bad cough, a potion might be administered, which would include pieces of the human skull ground to a fine powder. Epileptics sought out public beheadings so they could drink from the criminal's blood while it was still warm and supposedly at the height of its efficacy.

Body Shopping
The Economy Fuelled by Flesh and Blood
by Donna Dickenson
Oneworld, 320 pp., $27.95

If you think such grisly practices have gone the way of feudalism, *Body Shopping: The Economy Fuelled by Flesh and Blood* will make you think again. A professor of medical ethics and humanities at the University of London, Donna Dickenson gives an account of modern medicine that seems better suited to the Dark Ages or the most dystopian science fiction than the 21st century. For all the talk of "scientific progress," it seems we have become only slightly more sophisticated in our uses and procurement of the human body than the medieval hangman.

Body Shopping describes a science that has become positively vampiric in its insatiable appetite for human tissue and organs, sometimes outright stealing the raw material it needs. A veritable black market in human flesh has been established, with each part individually appraised and priced: "Hand, $350-$850, Brain, $500-$600, Eviscerated torso, $1,100-$1,290." A whole cadaver can fetch up to $20,000. The uses to which this tissue is put are no less gruesome. Bone dust from stolen cadavers might be found in your dental work. The collagen used to plump a starlet's lips is likely derived from the cells of an infant's foreskin. The "secret ingredient" in the various beauty treatments marketed to Russian women? Aborted fetuses from Ukraine.

"One way or another someone makes money off the dead," one proud body snatcher declared, even as he pleaded guilty to over 60 counts of mutilation of human remains, and embezzlement. The entrepreneurial spirit cannot be tamed, it would seem, especially in so lucrative a venture as body shopping. Funeral homes plunder bodies for spare parts and sell them to hospitals and biotech firms. In one much-publicized case a New Jersey mortuary service sold the cancer-ridden bones of Alistair Cooke—along with parts from other unfortunate "clients"—to one of the country's largest tissue banks, netting over $4 million in just three years. China, too, has joined the body-snatchers, selling the organs of political prisoners and members of the despised Falun Gong sect to desperate "medical tourists" from around the world. A Chinese military hospital offers a kidney for the rock-bottom price of 200,000 yuan, a valuable source of revenue for the Chinese police state. As Dickenson wryly notes, "Buy yourself a kidney, keep the Chinese occupation of Tibet going."

But these are only the worst abuses. The means by which many scientists obtain the tissue they need tends to be much more subtle, if no more ethically sound. With the help of U.S. courts, researchers have created a paradoxical legal regime that treats the body as a priceless "gift" when first provided by the donor but as a valuable commodity once in the hands of a corporation or university. Under this model, the donor is a "pure altruist," unable to profit off (or even control) the uses to which his donation is put. Meanwhile, researchers are given the right to sell and patent the donated tissue. Such "one-way altruism," Dickenson writes, would be better termed exploitation.

In many cases, the donor might not even know he has made such a "donation" or how the donation will be used. People who give their bodies to science would no doubt be perturbed to find they are more likely to be sold to the highest bidder by universities and hospitals strapped for cash. One such "corpse wholesaler," Louisiana State University, earned nearly a quarter of a million dollars selling bodies from their "willed-donor" program to private companies and researchers. Doctors use samples taken from patients, without their knowledge or consent, to create cell lines for research. One woman, Henrietta Lacks, dead for over 50 years, is still "alive" in the form of cells taken during a tumor biopsy. In the Lacks case, at least, the cells were freely shared among researchers; today, such cell lines would likely be the subject of defensive patenting in what Dickenson terms the "great genome grab." Already, one-fifth of the human genome has been patented, much to the detriment of scientific research.

The schizophrenia of this system is nowhere more manifest than in the egg trade. By law, egg "donors" are permitted only to donate their eggs; any compensation they receive is purely for time and effort. In reality, eggs are being flagrantly sold on the open market, with "premium" prices going to in-demand donors, usually at a steep mark-up from what was originally given to the donor. In Eastern Europe, so-called egg "donors" are lured by agencies offering as much as $500—a paltry sum to Western college students (who can command as much as $20,000 for their ova) but enough to live on for six months in Russia or Ukraine. Eggs

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are not all these women sell; as one observer notes, "They work the cabarets, they'll sleep with men, they'll sell their eggs, and then go back again."

The demand for ova will only grow as scientists continue their search for that Holy Grail, stem cell technology. Media coverage rarely notes that demand, enamored as the press is with the promise of "therapeutic" cloning—which Dickenson insists on placing quotes around since, as she correctly notes, "no therapies have actually resulted yet." And human ova do not "grow on trees," as amply attested by the 2005 Hwang Woo Suk scandal. In the "world's biggest scientific fraud of recent times," Hwang coerced his junior researchers into providing eggs, giving them such high dosages of ovarian stimulation that over 15 percent developed severe ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, a condition which can lead to infertility or even death.

Hwang wasted more than 2,000 eggs and failed to create even a single stem cell line. The much-celebrated creation of Dolly, the cloned sheep, required 400 eggs with only one (much-publicized) success. Given such odds, Dickenson argues, the demand for eggs will likely be unslakeable, despite the many dangers harvesting poses for women. One scholar estimates that developing a personalized stem cell kit merely for every *diabetic* in Britain would require between one-third and one-half of young British women to donate their eggs.

That these appalling practices have been largely ignored is something Dickenson blames on the media, which cast even "secular bioethicists" (like herself) as Luddites or religious fanatics. Dickenson recalls one particularly bruising experience in which she took part in an ethics committee to consider the world's first human hand transplant. Along with the committee, Dickenson asked that the proposed recipient undergo a psychological consultation to ensure that he understood the risks and complications such surgery would involve. The doctors proposing the operation felt this too onerous a burden and, instead, performed the surgery in France. In the tabloids Dickenson was attacked as a "stick-in-the-mud enemy of medical and scientific progress" who had deprived Britain of its chance in the sun. (Less than three years later, the recipient had to have the hand amputated, having given up his medication regime, convinced that the hand was actually his own.)

Even such an embarrassing outcome as this, Dickenson sadly notes, has not caused scientists or the greater public to reconsider the current state of the body trade, or even to slow down its pace. Proponents of unrestrained scientific research are still portrayed as "valiant mavericks"—even though such "mavericks" are well in the majority of public opinion.

Nonetheless, *Body Shopping* is not a call to despair. "Resistance is not futile," writes Dickenson, and she has no patience for the would-be legalizers who argue it's better to regulate the body trade than try to eradicate it. "It's a weak-willed way of appeasing lawlessness," she declares, and insists there are better examples to follow. More collaborative models in gene patenting are already emerging, such as PXE International, which shares rights among patients and biotech firms. Britons and Americans would also do well to look to France, which has long banned sales of organs and gene patenting. In France, human dignity is seen not as "stupid" (as some prominent scientists would have it) but as an "inviolable principle" well worth defending.

Dickenson's optimism might seem foolish, given her dark story and the fantastic growth in medical tourism. (That unwavering devotion to human dignity has not stopped the French from traveling to Spain to buy eggs or to China to buy kidneys.) But resistance is the only alternative to an invasion of the body snatchers. ♦

Ladies Bountiful

The women of words in Augustan England.

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Though the term is now associated exclusively with women, "bluestocking" originally applied to both the men and the women who would gather, beginning in the 1750s, to drink tea and indulge in the art of conversation in the London drawing rooms of wealthy ladies.

By wearing the blue worsted stockings of the working man, instead of silk ones, the botanist and scholar Benjamin Stillingfleet was said to signal his rejection of luxury and concern for social status. Hannah More's mock-heroic poem "The Bas Bleu; or Conversation" (1787) celebrated the polite learning, elegant conversation, and high moral purpose of this English version of French salon culture, which brought together men of society (the Earl of Bath) with those in the professions and celebrities generally (Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Joshua Reynolds). Like the French version, these gatherings were a counterculture to the court, a forum of intellectual exchange and socially and politically critical ideas.

Brilliant Women
18th-Century Bluestockings
Edited by Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz
Yale, 160 pp., $50

Moreover, several women associated with the original Bluestocking circle were writers, and at least two were very learned: Elizabeth Carter, who translated the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, and Catharine Macaulay, who wrote a multivolume anti-royalist history of England. The highpoint of the influence of such

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women was captured in a portrait celebrating female creativity, painted in 1778 by Richard Samuel, in which More, Carter, and Macaulay were featured among "the nine living muses" of Great Britain.

Elizabeth Eger, lecturer in English at King's College, London, lays out this original social constellation in her first chapter. This small, richly illustrated volume accompanied a recent exhibition in London that drew on the resources of the National Portrait Gallery and other British collections. The dominant figure here is Elizabeth Montagu (also one of the "living muses"), who married into wealth and aristocracy and whose opulent mansion in London allowed literary and intellectual celebrity to shine to advantage. Combining philanthropy, culture, and commerce, Lady Elizabeth might be compared to the late Brooke Astor. Though she published a refutation of Voltaire's attack on Shakespeare, her merit resides in her support of worthy individuals, including such writers as the poet Ann Yearsley. She also helped finance an experimental (and short-lived) female community founded by her sister, the writer Sarah Scott.

Eger emphasizes the high moral tone that reigned among the original Bluestockings, which was accompanied by good works; but there is a danger in imputing too much influence to the Blues as a group with a cohesive program. There were many in England, among ordinary religious dissenters and literate laboring people alike, who were autodictats and moral improvers, reaching out to lift up fallen women and succor the poor or disabled. "Reform" was in the air in 18th-century England, alongside competition among the classes for status and wealth. It was a time of intense social, religious, political, and cultural foment and ferment all around.

As in France, the sociability represented by the Bluestockings—in particular the art of civilized conversation—could not survive the French Revolution, an event that, for radicals, signaled a break with any accommodation with the past. The transition is exemplified by Elizabeth Carter and Catharine Macaulay. Carter was a deeply pious and learned woman who chose not to marry. Frequently compared to France's great 17th-century Greek scholar, Madame Dacier, she clearly represents "Before." Macaulay, a prolific writer, is "After." Her *History of England* was seen in the 1760s already as a radical Whig response to David Hume's Tory *History of Great Britain*. She also wrote a challenge in 1790, the year before her death, to Edmund Burke's account of the French Revolution.

Lady Elizabeth Montagu

PD / THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Brilliant Women contains portraits of both women that link them to classical tradition. Macaulay, however, increasingly became a poster girl for the radical cause, and the images of her, in Roman garb, festooning pamphlets promoting liberty, were clearly propagandistic. In 1777 she allowed the commissioning by an elderly admirer (a Protestant divine, no less) of a portrait-statue of herself as the Roman figure of History. That it was positioned in a Christian church evoked much negative comment. Not long thereafter, at the age of 47, she married a man of no birth at all, a ship's mate of 21. This was too much even for a radical like John Wilkes. Though Macaulay was praised on this side of the Atlantic for her republicanism, the broadsides of the day portray the ridicule her personal behavior brought down on herself and learned women in general.

Though only Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft are mentioned in this connection in *Brilliant Women*, many women of bluestocking tendencies were also active supporters of the American cause against their own government. (Missing here is any exploration of the connection between female sexual permissiveness and radical politics, exemplified by the relationship between Wollstonecraft and William Godwin.) It is hardly surprising, as Britain reeled from the Revolution and then the war in Europe, that "bluestockings," now applied exclusively to learned women, became an uncomplimentary term.

The most vitriolic in their attacks were the leading Romantic writers who, according to Eger, wished "to protect the masculine strongholds of literary institutions." They included such liberal-minded men as Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and William Hazlitt. Coleridge, as quoted here, wrote a letter to Charlotte Brent in 1813 that praised her for her bad spelling—and then added, "The longer I live, the more do I loathe in stomach, and deprecate in Judgement, all, all *Bluestockingism*."

For feminists, the increasing ridicule of learned women is a sign that men wished to keep uppity women in their place. Thus, the remaining chapters of *Brilliant Women* are about "defiance," "subversions," and other tropes that suggest the difficulty women have in their battle for intellectual parity with men. The struggle of women against entrenched institutions for admittance to the well-endowed universities (and especially the perks thereof) received canonical expression in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

A more plausible explanation for the ridicule of learned women may simply be the belatedness with which women embraced learning. Without doubt, historical inequity has characterized the distribution of the affluence that allows gifted individuals to pursue the life of the mind. But the products of

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such industry, traditionally supported by elite patronage or other subsidies, were increasingly supplanted in the 18th century by popular forms of intellectual consumption for which readers paid their own hard-earned money.

By 1750, there are estimated to have been several thousand writers in London, but there can hardly have been that many patrons. Instead, booksellers and lending libraries sprouted up all over England. The traditional qualification for admission to the literary sphere—classical learning—was superseded as writers (many of them women) increasingly churned out novels. Few of these had Latin, much less Greek. Women who chose learning were throwing in their lot with a product of diminishing cultural worth. The really smart women were those quick to seize the opportunity offered by the market in popular fiction. I suspect it was not the learned ladies, but the smart ones, who scared Coleridge.

You do not need 500 pounds a year to write novels, which Woolf had insisted was necessary for a woman wishing to write. (I wrote two while working full-time.) It *is* essential, however, if your desire is to become first-rate in, say, classics or physics, fields that take years of training and personal sacrifice to master.

The editors of *Brilliant Women* stress a perennial feminist trope, "foremothers" of women's creativity, and suggest a line of development from the Bluestocking circle to contemporary feminism by drafting as exhibits sundry female personalities, from Madame de Staël to Germaine Greer. Yet in truth, the original Bluestockings, like today's scholarly women, had their intellectual precursors in the accumulated tradition of Western learning, i.e., the "patriarchy," which feminists like Virginia Woolf have made it their business to delegitimize.

The wonderful portraits of some of the women represented here make this aspect impossible to ignore, and *Brilliant Women* rightly, if inadvertently, restores the prominence of this tradition in the lives of the original Bluestockings. ♦

Money for Nothing

A bird's-eye view of Wall Street's nervous breakdown.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Feel free to disagree, but for my money the best anecdote in this entertaining and informative guide to the international economy comes near the end, when the author likens the United States of America to an obese Italian woman named Maria.

Let me explain. The author, David Smick, is a well-traveled, well-connected financial consultant who has journeyed to Rome, among other places. It was in the Eternal City in 1989, Smick writes, that he dined with "an important strategic Italian financial adviser"—or ISIFA for short—and "at least two dozen" other people, including the ISIFA's wife, Maria. Maria was a homely *bambina*. Smick tells us that she "was carrying at least an extra eighty or ninety pounds." Also—and this is important—she didn't speak English.

The World Is Curved
Hidden Dangers to the Global Economy
by David M. Smick
Portfolio, 272 pp., $26.95

Late in the evening, after many glasses of wine, the ISIFA rose to deliver a toast. Maria, gazing upon her successful husband from the far end of the table, beamed with pride. What happened next was, well, horrible:

> Our host, her husband, continued [in English]: 'And now we must toast Maria, the most beautiful flower in the desert.' Maria beamed more upon hearing her name, but the guest sitting next to me, an Italian investment banker, whispered, 'Oh boy, here it comes,' as if he had witnessed on other occasions what was about to take place. 'To Maria,' (she beamed some more), the host said again as everyone raised his glass, 'my wife, my rare gem. To Maria … THE PIG!'

Smick was aghast. And yet the ISIFA kept calling Maria a pig, and Maria kept smiling, as she had absolutely no idea what her cruel husband was saying. Eventually, Smick continues, the "bizarre, perhaps even offensive," episode concluded. But he took from it a lesson. It was not that rich guys can be—and I mean this in the nicest possible way—insufferable little jerks; Smick probably knew that already. The lesson he drew was that "Maria is America—overloaded with debt, self-doubt, and self-absorption—and, more important, unable to communicate its message to the world." The United States, as they say, has "issues."

And what issues! America's twin budget and current account deficits (the government spends more than it takes in, and the value of the goods coming in to the country is more than the value of the goods going out); the rising price of oil; the weakening dollar; the mortgage and credit crises; rising protectionist sentiments—the list goes on. Smick has a knack for explaining these economic problems in everyday language. His is a friendly authorial presence. The book reads like a pleasant conversation at a cocktail party. The topic of the conversation—what's going on outside the party—is not so pleasant, however. Not pleasant at all. Actually, it's frightening.

The fundamental problem is simple. What we call globalization—free trade, international capital flows, relatively pro-market public policies worldwide—has led to unprecedented prosperity. But the engine

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of globalization is an international banking and financial system that is subject to frequent turbulence. Fortunes rise and fall overnight. Jobs appear and vanish with astonishing speed. The very hint that authorities lack confidence in the system can cause a panic. No one is entirely in control. And that means no one is entirely accountable.

"Today's world economy," Smick writes, "bears a striking resemblance to the integrated markets and overwhelming prosperity of the period from 1870 to 1914." Look how that turned out.

The World Is Curved is a discursive book, ranging from Tokyo to Martha's Vineyard, from European Central banker Jean-Claude Trichet to the decidedly non-European New York senator Charles Schumer. The attentive reader will quickly grasp two key themes. The first is that the so-called information economy is imbued with ignorance. A lack of transparency rules. "[I]n the new global economy," Smick writes, "this crazy ocean of global liquidity has not only increased the number of unknowns but also re-arranged their relationships and relative importance." What you don't know really can hurt you.

The "Great Credit Crisis of 2007-2008" is a case in point. When real estate prices tanked in 2006, the world's most prestigious investment banks became saddled with bad debt from the subprime mortgages which lenders had issued in the belief that anyone—*anyone*—could own a home, and that home values would never fall. (Oops!) During the boom years, pools of subprime mortgages had been "securitized" or auctioned off, contaminating the financial system. But the invisible right hand didn't know what the invisible left hand was doing. So the problem now is that the masters of the universe are stumped: Exactly how much bad debt is there? Where is it? What does it cost? Wall Street doesn't have a clue.

And it gets worse. If everyone is less knowledgeable than was previously thought, they are also less powerful. This is Smick's second theme. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has wielded considerable power during the crisis: arranging for the sale of one investment bank, allowing another to collapse, nationalizing a major insurer, taking over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, preparing a massive bailout plan that would give him ever more discretion than he already possesses.

Yet Smick warns us that even Paulson can only do so much:

> The size of the financial markets, relative to the governments, has become so monstrously huge, there is no other means of maintaining stability than to establish a psychology of confidence. The governments themselves cannot by edict restore order. They can only project to the markets a sense that they know what they're doing.

That is what Paulson is trying to accomplish.

As the government's power recedes, new forces emerge. Global hedge funds, oil-producing nations, and sovereign wealth funds (pools of capital associated with and often controlled by foreign governments) wield considerable leverage over the international markets. These new actors do not necessarily have the interests of the American citizen in mind. Nor do the individuals empowered by the market or by governments who increasingly make decisions affecting the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people.

Smick writes that the "industrialized world has surrendered control of its financial system to a tiny group of five thousand or so technical market specialists spread throughout investment banks, hedge funds, and other financial institutions." And when that tiny group of specialists truly messed things up, the future of the global economy was placed in the hands of two individuals—Paulson and Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke—whom no one had elected and whose decisions often were made outside any democratic mechanism. Nationalize AIG? Turn Fannie and Freddie into conservatorships? Congress passed no legislation on these matters. Paulson decided. And it was done.

David Smick is right to point out globalization's significant achievements, the value of entrepreneurial risk-taking, and the risk that "class-warfare" and protectionism pose to global prosperity. His timely book risks being overtaken by events, however. Events which suggest that our free-market system is not as free, and our democracy not as democratic, as we like to think. ♦

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Light on the Subject

How mathematics can explain reflection and refraction.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

The dust jacket of *The Best of All Possible Worlds* calls it "a journey through scientific attempts to envision the best of all possible worlds." Its more modest Introduction promises an account of *optimization* from its origins in mathematical physics to applications in biology and the social sciences. And that subject is introduced with a lucid and leisurely account of important ideas in classical mechanics: the physics, founded by Galileo and Newton, that describes spinning tops and bouncing billiard balls, projectiles, and planets.

The Best of All Possible Worlds
Mathematics and Destiny
by Ivar Ekeland
Chicago, 214 pp., $14

Exposition then stops, and the carefully laid-out mathematics serves only as a peg on which the author can hang his views on a variety of large subjects—war, evolution, the common good, global warming. Those views are conventional, and it's hard to see the concluding op-ed style ruminations as anything but missed opportunities.

Ekeland centers his mathematical story on attempts to explain Snell's Law, which characterizes the way in which light refracts (bends) as it passes from air to water—or, more generally, from one medium to another. Refraction causes a stick dipped into a pond to appear bent at the water's surface. Snell's Law was established empirically, but Descartes showed that it could be derived from two assumptions: That one of its terms, called the *refractive index*, denotes the relative speeds of light in air and water, and that light—like sound—travels faster in water than in air.

The great mathematician Fermat also approached the problem from first principles, in a very bold and very different way, by formulating a single principle to explain both refraction and reflection. The law of reflection had been known since ancient times: The angle at which light strikes a mirror equals that at which it is reflected. That law is mathematically equivalent to saying that, in traveling from the original to the mirror to the beholder, a light ray uses the shortest possible path. And when one of Fermat's correspondents proposed that this expressed nature's economy, Fermat *made* something of the suggestion. He generalized the "least path" principle by proposing that a light ray passing through both water and air would follow the path that took the least possible *time*. The law of reflection follows immediately, and Fermat showed that Snell's Law would also follow if one of Descartes's assumptions were reversed, by supposing that light travels faster in air than in water.

It took two centuries to determine the facts about the speed of light. (Fermat's assumption was the correct one.) Meanwhile, the success of his "least time" principle presented a philosophical and scientific puzzle. It seemed to attribute purposive, predictive, reasoning abilities to inanimate nature, as if a light ray sniffed out all possible paths and then chose the one by which it would reach its destination most quickly.

Fermat argued that the philosophical question could be sidestepped: Since the principle yielded correct predictions, further speculation was unnecessary. Pierre Moreau de Maupertuis—scholar, courtier, and scientist—embraced the suggestion of purpose, which he attributed not to light rays but to the God who created both the light and its governing laws. He further generalized Fermat's principle by defining a quantity called "action," and proposing that all natural phenomena could be deduced from the single principle that nature acts so as to minimize its expenditure of action--an elegant behavior testifying to the care and wisdom of nature's Creator.

Many leading scientists dismissed the suggestion of teleology and purpose behind this "principle of least action" but fruitfully pursued its underlying mathematics. They developed methods to pose and attack a large class of *optimization* problems. An optimization problem asks us to determine, among all possible solutions to a set of constraints, one that maximizes or minimizes a chosen quantity: time, distance, profit, and so on. Here is an example: Find the shortest path that connects two given points and lies on some given surface. On a flat surface it will be a straight line, on the surface of a sphere some segment of a great circle, and so on.

Ekeland follows this thread through key developments of classical mechanics. The principle of least action eventually took its place not as a fundamental law but as a useful consequence of laws that are more basic. It lost its metaphysical appeal when its proper formulation was discovered: Nature does not always minimize the expenditure of action, but acts to satisfy a more technical and less demanding criterion less suggestive of divine perfection.

Ekeland's discussion culminates with an excellent account of "chaos" that will take a layman well beyond the famous sound bite that, because weather is chaotic, a butterfly's flutter in China could cause a tornado in Kansas. Ekeland makes clear the difference between a system that is

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deterministic—its state at any moment uniquely determines its entire future—and one that is *predictable*, a distinction that would have surprised the founders of our physics. Classical mechanics provides equations of motion that determine how a mechanical system will evolve, but that evolution will not be predictable unless those equations can, in a precise technical sense, be "solved."

The technical term for "solvable" is "integrable." If a system's equations of motion are integrable we can, from a description of its state at any moment, estimate its state a short time later—and can predict more distant futures by repeating that procedure. Although the initial measurements may contain errors, and errors may be introduced each time we take another step into the future, those errors are nonetheless manageable and the procedure can yield accurate predictions.

But even idealized descriptions of real-world systems are rarely integrable: We cannot manage the accumulation of errors, and that can drastically limit how far ahead we are able to see. The ubiquity of non-integrable systems forms part of Ekeland's argument that we are unlikely to find a single principle or single set of laws that accounts for all physical phenomena—a truth he clearly regards as applicable well beyond the bounds of physics.

The physics is worth the price of admission, but *Best of All Possible Worlds* has two weaknesses deserving note. One seems endemic to popular books on science, if not to human nature: Using other people's ideas as foils to (or anticipations of) one's own, but not taking them seriously enough to get them right. Ekeland cites, for example, the *Meno*, a Platonic dialogue about teaching and learning. It portrays, as usual, a character called Socrates disposed to arguing and telling stories; but to identify particular views of the dramatic character Socrates with those of Plato, or to take his stories as straightforward assertions of belief, requires a leap—one that is often questionable.

In the *Meno* Socrates poses questions that guide a slave boy to solve a geometrical problem, and then asks how the boy could have learned the answer, which he hadn't known and Socrates hadn't told him. Faced with this commonplace, but near-miraculous event, Socrates offers a story: We have all had a previous existence in which we saw truth directly, and when we seem to be acquiring knowledge we are, in fact, recalling it. Ekeland takes that myth at face value and asserts that, according to "the Platonic tradition" (as if there were just one), all learning is recollection. This suits his expository purposes, but does not provide a reliable guide to Plato.

Willebrod Snell

Ekeland makes clear the difference between a system that is deterministic—*its state at any moment uniquely determines its entire future—and one that is* predictable, *a distinction that would have surprised the founders of our physics.*

Then come the op-eds. "The Common Good" uses the preceding mathematics lesson as a segue: If you wish to regulate society scientifically by solving an optimization problem you would need to define the quantity to be optimized, something like "the common good." So we're off on a package tour—two paragraphs on utilitarianism, one on John Rawls, a bit of Rousseau, etc.—wending to the unimpeachable but unsurprising insight that an agreed-upon definition of the common good would be awfully hard to come by. The gist of "May the Best One Win" has been well said in many an essay by the late Stephen Jay Gould, whose influence Ekeland acknowledges: Evolution cannot be modeled as an optimization problem, either, since there is no universal measure of "fitness" to be optimized.

Ekeland sprinkles these conventional views with faculty lounge sneers, such as "the basic claim to superiority of Western civilization" is that "we have an overwhelming military advantage, which enables us to take the land and resources away from others and put it to our own use." How's that for coming to grips with opinions other than one's own? Of course, the point of such one-liners is not to assert an intelligible proposition but to advertise that one is the right sort of chap.

For that matter, a review may not tell the author he should have chosen to write a different book. It may, however, suggest that he has misunderstood his strengths and, as a result, written a book that is—well, suboptimal. ♦

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Islamofascist

The sinister career of a not-so-nifty mufti.

BY JAMIE WEINSTEIN

When not denying the Holocaust outright, Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad often asks rhetorically why the Palestinian Arabs should bear the consequences for a crime committed by Europeans. "If the Europeans are telling the truth in their claim that they have killed six million Jews in the Holocaust during the World War II," he said in 2005, "why should the Palestinian nation pay for the crime?"

Icon of Evil
Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam
by David G. Dalin and John F. Rothman
Random House, 240 pp., $26

With his question, Ahmadinejad seeks to frame Israel's legitimacy through the lens of the Holocaust. Of course, the Jewish state's foundations and right to exist go much deeper; nonetheless, Ahmadinejad's query has an answer, one that David G. Dalin and John F. Rothmann explore in *Icon of Evil: Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam*. The book has two main purposes. The first and most important is to detail the life of Haj Amin al-Husseini and his close connection to, and complicity with, Hitler's destruction of the Jews. The second is to draw a line from al-Husseini to modern jihadi terrorism.

Icon of Evil does a splendid job of recounting the little-known, though enormously important, history of Haj Amin al-Husseini. Born in Palestine sometime in the last decade of the 19th century, al-Husseini rose to become the leader of the Arabs of Palestine through his role as the mufti of Jerusalem, president of the Supreme Muslim Council, and president of the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine. For years, al-Husseini incited anti-Jewish riots and anti-British animus. Finally the British authorities decided it was time to remove him from Mandatory Palestine in 1937, when a British official was assassinated by one of his followers.

After escaping and causing mischief in other locales throughout the Middle East, the mufti found his way to Berlin in November 1941, where he was welcomed as a "head of state in exile and deferred to as an important ally and political supporter," according to Dalin and Rothmann. Al-Husseini, who had a penchant for the high life, was given luxurious accommodations, a car and driver, and a considerable expense account.

The blond-haired, blue-eyed al-Husseini was accepted by Hitler as an "honorary Aryan." The mufti also developed deep relationships with other top German officials; he and Heinrich Himmler, according to Dalin and Rothmann, "collaborated most actively and consistently." And while al-Husseini would deny after the war any real connection with Adolf Eichmann, the authors argue that the record of their close connection is "indisputable." One of Eichmann's senior deputies testified at Nuremberg that al-Husseini "was one of Eichmann's best friends and had constantly incited him to accelerate the extermination measures."

Yet the Mufti's role was not simply that of a cheerleader for the Nazis. In addition to broadcasting to Muslims throughout the world, and encouraging Arabs to "kill the Jews wherever you find them," al-Husseini actively recruited Muslims in Eastern Europe and the Balkans for the German war effort.

At the same time that he was serving as a propagandist for the Nazis, al-Husseini was preparing to move the Holocaust to the Middle East—and even before a German victory in Europe. He seems to have urged the Germans to bomb the Jewish communities in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and having failed to persuade the Luftwaffe to divert resources to do that, "in late 1944, al-Husseini organized the dispatch of five parachuters to Palestine with ten containers of toxin to poison Tel Aviv's water system." The attack was unsuccessful.

Al-Husseini escaped prosecution for war crimes. He ultimately found his way back to the Middle East, where he continued to foment hatred of Jews and Israel, and died in 1974.

While al-Husseini was certainly a mentor and inspiration to his distant relative, the future Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Dalin/Rothmann's insinuation that there is a direct line from al-Husseini to modern jihadism and the attacks of September 11 is a bit overwrought. It is true that al-Husseini used religion to inspire the hatred and murder of Jews; but he was not a Sayyid Qutb, a leading light of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose works have influenced Osama bin Laden and continue to inspire many of the jihadi radicals America confronts today. Indeed, as Dalin/Rothmann themselves note, al-Husseini was much more likely to make accommodation with secular governments than someone like Qutb. He was an opportunist, who made whatever accommodations he had to in pursuit of his cause, not a pure Islamist of the Qutb variety.

Of course, even without being crucial to the rise of modern Islamist terror, al-Husseini's legacy is sordid enough. A war criminal who aided and abetted Hitler in the genocide of Europe's Jews, he is the answer to Ahmadinejad's question. ♦

Jamie Weinstein, a graduate student at the London School of Economics, writes for the North Star Writers Group.

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—New Republic, ***October 8***

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